

THE DELECTABLE COUNTRY



BY THE SAME AUTHOR

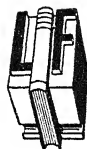
*Whiskey Rebels, the Story of a
Frontier Uprising*

Pittsburgh, the Story of a City

The Keelboat Age on Western Waters
(in preparation)

THE DELECTABLE COUNTRY

BY
LELAND D. BALDWIN

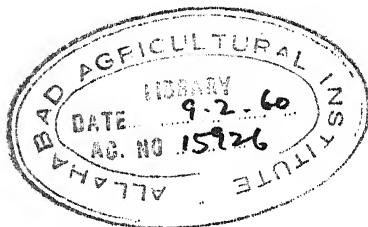


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FOREWORD

Many of the incidents used in *The Delectable Country* are based upon fact. Particularly valuable were Francis Baily's *Journal of a Tour in Unsettled Parts of North America*, Zadok Cramer's *Navigator*, and Hugh Henry Brackenridge's *Gazette Writings, Incidents of the Western Insurrection*, and *Modern Chivalry*. Some of the legal incidents will be found in Brown's *Forum*. Those familiar with the history of western Methodism will readily recognize Peter Cartwright as in some respects the prototype of Daniel Strong, but they will be astonished to find western Pennsylvania subject to the Philadelphia Conference in the later 1790's. It should be added that Sam Brady was defended by James Ross, not Brackenridge; that the big freeze on the Ohio was in December, 1796; that the yellow fever epidemic in New Orleans actually began in September, 1796; and that Philip Nolan may not have been in New Orleans in the spring of 1796. To give the devil his due, this novel is based upon materials gleaned by the author in the last decade and set forth in his three monographs, *Whiskey Rebels, the Story of a Frontier Uprising*; *The Keelboat Age on Western Waters*; and *Pittsburgh, the Story of a City*. Credit for the yarn about Mike Fink and the bull is due Walter Blair and Franklin J. Meine, authors of *Mike Fink, King of Mississippi Keelboatmen*.

THE DELECTABLE COUNTRY

Chapter 1

DAVID BRADDEE STEADIED THE TILLER OF THE KEELBOAT "Elzie" between his thighs and cocked his elbow at the rising sun as he sounded three long and mellow notes on his bullock's-horn. The minor strain bounded from the steep side of Coal Hill and floated eerily up the Ohio to the point of land between the Allegheny and Monongahela where lay the scattered cabins of Pittsburgh.

David looked around on the greening hills which showed that spring was about to burst, not with the warm sweetness of the settled land, but with the rude boisterousness of the half-tamed savage. Ten months had made very little change, he thought. Vestiges of the primitive forest still lingered on the northern shore even where the lay of the land was suitable for farming. The Indian wars were to blame for that, for even yet Pittsburgh was subject to alarms. Perhaps all of that would soon be altered by Mad Anthony Wayne and his Legion of the United States, which the "Elzie" had passed a fortnight ago at the Big Grave.

It would be good to be back in Pittsburgh again, David decided. Louisville and even New Orleans were all right in their way—at least the gals there had accepted him without question as a man. In fact, he'd made quite a hit with them. They seemed to like auburn-haired and red-complected fellows down river. The farther down, the better the gals liked them. His regular features relaxed and his blue eyes became dreamy at the recollection. Yes, there was no doubt about it, he had left Pittsburgh a boy

and now he was returning a man. Wasn't Big Matt letting him pilot the keel into town? He thought of the sloe-eyed gal at Mother Pearson's shebang and hoped she'd be on the bank to see him come in. But then maybe that was asking too much. Gals like her weren't likely to be astir this early, especially if there were many soldiers left in town.

The yellow ball of the sun disentangled itself from the tops of the trees on Quarry Hill and leaped triumphantly upward toward the zenith. David glanced down at the men toiling at the poles. There were eight of them, mostly brawny, bearded fellows dressed in red shirts and deerskin trousers in honor of the end of the voyage. Farther down river they wore jeans and linsey-woolsey shirts, or if the weather was warm, they stripped to the waist. Red shirts were too good as targets for redskin marksmen.

The keelboat was long and narrow, and pointed at both ends; the center was occupied by a long cargo box which barely left room for the runway on each side, the steersman's notched upping-block in the stern, and the oarsmen's seats in the bow. The crew was poling on the shoreward side, each man began at the bow of the boat, dropped the spike end of his stout twenty-foot pole on the bottom of the river, fitted the button end against a pad on his shoulder, and walked down the cleated runway to the stern. There he pulled his dripping pole from the mud, crossed between the cargo box and the upping-block on which David stood, and ran along the free runway to the bow of the boat, where he repeated the performance.

Sometimes drops of muddy water fell on Old Tom Braddee, who was perched on the whiskey keg atop the cargo box, but he continued to gaze indifferently through rheuming eyes at the river and to slobber tobacco juice over his yellow-white beard as he spat on the deck. David wished that the old man hadn't come the last leg of the journey

with them. When they had stopped overnight at the Braddee home at McKee's Rocks, Old Tom had insisted that he was going into Pittsburgh to see Sam Brady, tried for killing a passel of marauding redskins, and had sworn that he would walk in if they didn't take him. And he would, too, for he was still good for three times the distance. Tom Braddee had been a famous Indian fighter in his day and was still as independent as a hog on ice. He'd taken to reading the Bible and doing a little preaching of late years, and the people at the Rocks looked up to him amazingly. Not that David took much stock in the preaching, though he did respect the old boy for his prowess as a hunter and Indian fighter.

The operation of poling the "Elzie" always fascinated David when he could look down on it from the captain's upping-block. The sureness with which the men planted their poles and the economy of movement with which they made their way to the stern was a beautiful sight to a boatman, and there was no better crew on the river than Big Matt Braddee's. Big Matt, David's foster father, was a black-whiskered man in his forties, as dependable as he was huge and solid. George Pancake, Big Matt's brother-in-law, was a smaller man but as tireless and efficient as a wire.

Now Lank Braddee, Big Matt's youngest son, was a different proposition. He had been christened Melancthon by a passing Lutheran preacher and perhaps the name had thrown him off balance or maybe he just wasn't bright. At any rate he never seemed to be able to hold a pole steady but always weaved a little as he scrambled along the runway. Once, at Letart's Rapids, he had weaved a little too much and had thrown the boat against a rock. It was only God's mercy that had saved the "Elzie" from wreck that day. But Lank was a good bowsman. Not another man on

board had such eyes, as sharp as a hawk's, for snags, or was quicker at bracing off from them.

Old Tom shifted on his whiskey barrel and spat into the river. "Must be sojers from Fayette," he said. David had seen the boat coming long before but the glare of the sun in his eyes had made it difficult to identify it. He paid silent homage to the keenness of the old man's vision. The craft was an open bateau with a dozen or so men at the oars and was in the middle of the swelling Allegheny racing at double speed.

David lifted the bullock's-horn and gave the bateau a mournful salute. Nothing but an army boat would be in such a hurry. Probably going to Fort Washington with dispatches from the president—or maybe just one of them goddam gentleman officers out for a morning spin. You never could tell. It would be just like one of them quality younger sons to come racing down the current for ten miles and then make his men labor back to the fort while he hunted along the bank.

By now the army boat had entered the Ohio and the blue coats of the soldiers and their natty caps trimmed in green were plainly visible from the keelboat. Part of the fourth sub-legion from Fort Fayette, thought David. Yes, there was a hard-faced lieutenant sitting next to the coxswain and holding to a fowling piece as though he was afraid to set it down. Hope he runs into a bear, thought David viciously.

No love was lost between soldiers and rivermen in those days, and several of the "Elzie's" crew, as they ran around the cargo box, paused to hurl cheerful insults at the blue coats. The well-disciplined oarsmen made no answers, but the coxswain unbent far enough to hurl an epithet the most printable part of which was "mud turtles." The keelers yelled with delight and the remainder of the coxswain's remarks were lost as the bateau passed out of earshot. Old

Tom displayed the first animation he had shown since leaving the Rocks.

"Damn the hull clamjamfrey of 'em," he grumbled, "ef I had ol' Katy here now I'd cut their combs with a slug of lead. It wouldn't be the fust time I'd tuk a crack at they bloody-backs, nuther," he added darkly.

"It's indigo-backs this time, gaffer," suggested David.

"What's the differ?" retorted the old man hotly. "A sojer's a sojer whatever the complection of his back. They're all thievin' hullions an' I wouldn't give a battered tuppence fer a rigimen of 'em. Now I mind back in fifty-five when me an' Dick Penburne was with Braddock—"

Big Matt lifted his pole from the mud and as he crossed between the upping-block and the cargo box David caught his anxious glance. David knew that his father would let him wreck the boat before he would interfere, once he had been put in charge, and the realization brought him back to business. He shaded his eyes from the glare of the sun and studied the meeting of the rivers. The Allegheny was at half flood and its turbid waters were backing up the Monongahela. There should be a counter current along the south shore that would take them without labor perhaps as much as a mile upstream. It was the crossing to the Pittsburgh bank that would be ticklish.

The cracked old voice grumbled on. "Davy, mind what I tell ye," it expostulated. "I was a-sayin' that Ginerel Braddock an' Colonel Washington—"

"Yes, gaffer," replied David absently. He could have told the story backward. At this point Colonel Washington had got out of a forage cart and come up to General Braddock, who was wearing a dinner napkin under his chin and waving his sword like billy-o. Maybe there wasn't going to be no eddy where the current of the Allegheny hit Coal

Hill. He peered anxiously across the cargo box at the roily water ahead. No, by Jupe, there wasn't.

"All right, men," he said, "toss poles and man the oars."

The setting poles clattered on the deck of the cargo box and the four men first in line took their places on the thwarts in the bow. The long ash oars were dropped into the tholes and the blades poised above the flood, ready for any emergency. Big Matt clambered to the deck of the cargo box and sat down. He slipped the strap of the heavy shoulder pad over his head and threw the apparatus on the deck beside him. The "Elzie" was drifting now in the counter current opposite Pittsburgh. The ruins of Fort Pitt were clearly visible and the old barracks that General O'Hara was using for army stores. Then there were the dwellings of General O'Hara and Major Kirkpatrick, each pretentious structures of four or five rooms which, according to their political enemies, exhibited tendencies to luxurious living and aristocratic habits. Next was the gut in the bank up which floodwater sometimes backed to a pond below the Diamond. David noted with satisfaction that the water was nowhere near the gut and that there was plenty of beach on which to unload.

Old Tom was getting garrulous of late, thought David, or maybe he was just glad to have men folks to talk to. By now Braddock would be larruping the lobster-backs with the flat of his sword. Pretty soon he would be running them through because they didn't want to stand up and be shot at by the frog-eaters.

"Yes, gaffer," said David. "General Braddock didn't know as much about fighting as you and Colonel Washington."

"Washington be damned," sputtered the old man. "Him with his nigger wenches an' Hamilton's ring through his nose, a-lashin' good men to a frazzle an'—"

That was the wrong bear to lock horns with, grinned

David to himself. Durned if he hadn't forgotten that Washington had once tied Tom Braddee to a wagon wheel and given him thirty-nine lashes. That and the excise on whiskey. Hard to tell whether the excise or the cat-o'-nine-tails bit the old man's hide the deeper. Woodsmen had long memories. David was like that himself, though he couldn't properly be called a woodsman, not like the old codger there on the cargo box.

Wonder if anybody was a-living in the old log redoubt above the gut. David looked without distaste upon the ill-assorted and unpainted cabins and frame houses of Water Street that sheltered a medley of tavern-keepers and commission merchants. Best looking town he'd ever seen unless it was Orleans or Natchez-on-the-Hill. The poplars and locusts were coming along right well. Pretty soon the locusts would be blooming. If the wind was right then you could smell them clear over on this side.

His eyes traveled along the river bank. There were three keelboats and several Kentucky flatboats tied below the cut in the bank at the end of Wood Street. Might find room to edge in there if he tried. Farther up the river were several other flats with clusters of people on the beach above them. Probably movers. David disliked movers. They never could manage their flats and it was as much as a keeler's boat was worth to try to pass them on a bend.

Suddenly David burst into a cold sweat. Damn if he hadn't clean forgot the bar. No wonder Matt had been worried. David leaned to port and studied the roiling current anxiously. The middle of the river was nothing but a swirl of little eddies. The water might be a foot deep or three feet. If it was three feet he was safe for the "Elzie," even when laden, drew only twenty-eight inches. The keelboat drifted on and David watched for other signs. Suddenly he almost laughed. A tree was turning around majes-

tically in the dead center of the bar. There was lots of water.

General Braddock was getting madder now every moment and Washington's buckskinned Virginians had been decimated by rifle fire from a corps of lobster-back "yofficers" who couldn't tell a hunting shirt from a pair of antlers.

David had forgotten about that. It wasn't quite time for Braddock to begin pushing his sword through his men's guts. David glanced across at the village. People were gathering on Water Street, whether to see the movers off or to see the "Elzie" come in. Well, he knew what to do about that. He lifted the bullock's-horn from its peg and gave it another winding. At its lugubrious wail he could see the people on the bank gesticulate and point at the "Elzie."

They were about opposite Smithfield Street now and a little above the movers' flatboats.

"Lank, take the bow," he commanded. Lank took up a setting pole and stationed himself at the bow, ready to fend off floating logs or warn of snags.

"Ready, oars," said David sharply. The watchful men leaned forward and the blades swung back. He eased the tiller until the boat was heading diagonally toward the town. His arm raised slowly and dropped. "Hup!" he said, and raised it again. "Hup, hup, hup, hup!" At the third "hup" the oars bit into the water, then feathered, and bit again in the tempo David had set.

As the boat leaped forward he felt the shiver of the tiller between his thighs. The quiet counter current was left to starboard and the craft tossed in the eddies over the bar.

"Hard on the oars, men," called David, and the men responded with a burst of misdirected energy that would have made a blue-water sailor laugh. The timing was soon lost in the rough water and David resumed his "hup, hup" as he held the tiller steady with hands and thighs. Suddenly

the boat was out of the turbulent eddies and shot unimpeded toward the bank. Big Matt nodded with relief to his son as if to say, "Well done, lad," and turned his gaze toward the village.

"Ease up, men," commanded David. The boat lost headway in the descending current of the Monongahela and the ragged bank loomed closer and gradually shut the village from view.

"Easy does it now, men, easy does it. Hup, hup, hup. Ship oars." The oars came in with a clatter. Old Tom was still grumbling on. "An' then clar across them falled trees I seed the ginerals sword flash up an' then go spang into poor Jerry's throat."

By Gad, thought David, I'm going to make that hole neat as a bull's-eye. It was the proudest moment of his life. He stole a glance at the bank, hoping that the sloe-eyed gal was somewhere in the crowd. As tasty a slut as there was at Mother Pearson's. Almost good enough for a gentleman officer. Arcola de Cavalini, her name was. David savored its strange sound in his mind. It was a lot like she was, he decided; sort of distant and above the rest of the world, like the sunset on a mountain. Well, he was a man now; there wasn't no doubt of that. His blood pounded hot in his veins. The slight shudder of the tiller between his thighs gave him an erotic satisfaction. Yes, sir, he was a man now.

Twenty feet left between the bow of the "Elzie" and the edge of the water. The crowd was shouting encouragement or trying to rattle him by jeers, but he was deaf to both. He eased the tiller a little and the "Elzie" responded as if she were alive. Easy now, a little more. The beach edged closer. A little more. The keel grated softly in the mud and the boat stopped with a barely perceptible quiver. As perfect a broadside landing as ever was made, exulted

David, and it ain't every keel boat captain can do it without heeling.

Lank jumped up and cracked his heels together as he gave vent to a war whoop, then vaulted lightly ashore with his setting pole.

"An' then I drewed a bead right at the bottom of the ginerals' dinner napkin," said Old Tom, "an' pulled the trigger. He jus' doubled up an' slid outa the saddle kinda like a sack o' meal that's lost its balance. That's how Ginerals Braddock come by his mortal wound, an' don't you never let nobody tell you 'twas an Injun. I did it myself fer him killin' my brother Jerry."

Chapter 2



LANK CAUGHT THE BOW LINE THROWN TO HIM AND FASTENED it with a clove hitch to a piling, then ran back to fasten the stern line that David had already tossed ashore. David jumped lightly to the cargo box and walked forward. A broad plank that did double duty as gangway and as protection for the oarsmen against Indian shots was being wangled into place at the side door of the cargo box.

"I don't mind sayin' you done fine, Dave," said Big Matt as a sedate grin parted his black ambush. "Next time station a bowsman afore you come to a forks."

David nodded and picked up his white doeskin hunting shirt from the deck. It had strips of red and blue linen fringe sewed down the arms and on the cape, and curious whorls of different colored beads on back and breast. Cost him twelve buckskins in Louisville, it had, and he never could wear it without admiring the way it set off his red shirt and yellow buckskin trousers. He thrust his arms into the shirt and drew the folds across his breast. Then he picked up his belt with its tomahawk and sheathed hunting knife and buckled it around his waist.

"No use you stickin' around, Dave," said Big Matt. "We'll have this cargo out in no time and the 'Elzie' swung around in case the water falls. Here's a half-joe.* I'm payin' off tonight if Mr. Beaumont has the money."

"All right, dad," said David. "Maybe I won't be here when you're ready to push off. Not if I meet Mike Fink or any of the boys."

* A Portuguese gold coin, named from John V, worth about \$8.81 in the American colonies.

"Well, you know the way to the Rocks."

Old Tom was expostulating volubly with no one in particular and Big Matt turned to give him a hand as he slid down the sloping sides of the cargo box.

"I don't need no help, boy," said the old man querulously. "I kin still make my own way even ef I ain't as spry as I was."

David picked up a setting pole from the deck and vaulted over the heads of two men who were escorting a hogshhead of Kentucky tobacco down the gangplank. He landed almost on the toes of a short, heavy-set gentleman who had just hurried down the Wood Street cut.

"Howdy, Mr. Beaumont," said David.

"Why, David. I didn't know you. You've become a man. 'Pears like hard work agrees with boys, even though the fashion seems to be against it these days."

"Howdy, Mr. Beaumont," said Matt from the deck.

"Howdy, Matt, howdy. Glad to see you're in. We was lookin' for you before winter set in."

"Couldn't make it, Mr. Beaumont. Had onnat'ral high water on the Massissip' and three on us was laid up with fever an' agger at Lo'ville. Lost a good four months we did, all things considered. I stand to lose money on this trip."

"Too bad, Matt. It's the fortunes of the boating business, I guess. See anything of Injuns on the way?"

"Did they!" cackled Old Tom with unction. "At the Watch Tower comin' and goin' an' another at the mouth o' Wabash. Course nawthin' really serious like we had during the old wars. Nary a man hurt. Why I mind—"

"Good, good," said Mr. Beaumont, all but ignoring the old man. "I suppose you got all my bill of goods?"

"All but the queenswear. I tried every smuggler in Orleans but none of 'em had it. I got the molasses, though, an' the silks, an' gloves, an' laces, an' some Spanish wines

an' leather. An' I got French powder an' Loosiana lead an' a passel o' smuggled jewelry an' gimcracks."

Old Tom cautiously teetered down the gangplank. He wasn't exactly infirm yet and thought nothing of walking for miles over the hills with a squirrel rifle on his arm, but he wasn't as good at hill climbing as he used to be and foot logs made him dizzy. He spied David setting off along the beach.

"Davy," he called, "hold up thar, an' I'll go with ye."

David stopped. The movers' flatboats were strung out along the bank for most of the distance between Wood Street and Smithfield. They must be fixing to set off this morning or there would never be such a bustle with a hundred people coming and going. Old Tom came up, breathing heavily, but grumbling on as usual. He's sure taken to running off at the mouth, thought David.

They turned up the cut toward Water Street. Old Tom picked his way carefully over the stones and ruts and David continued to watch the movers around the edge of the bank. There was the quick tap of a horse's feet above them and the crunching of wheels. Suddenly a voice blared into David's consciousness.

"Get out of the road, blast you!"

David turned and saw his grandfather with his arm thrown up as if to ward off a blow and a horse coming rapidly down the narrow cut toward him. In two leaps David reached the horse's head, seized the reins, and forced it to one side. The animal almost fell on its haunches as it came to a stop. Old Tom sank to the ground completely unmanned and stared up at David from a face white with terror.

"Why don't you watch where you're going?" said a man's angry voice.

David looked up and for the first time noted that the

horse was hitched to a two-wheeled gig. The driver was a man of perhaps forty, with a long narrow face, a compressed slit of a mouth, and straight thin nose. His cravat had been jerked from his flowered waistcoat, his cocked hat had fallen at his feet, and his hair was in disarray. The girl beside him, for she could scarcely have been more than sixteen, had seized his driving arm in her fright. The man jerked his arm free.

"Didn't you hear me? I said why don't you watch where you're going?"

David studied the man impassively. "As for that, mister," he said slowly, "why don't *you* watch? A ten year old bound boy'd know better than to run his horse down a cut."

"Why, you insolent puppy, I'll horsewhip you within an inch of your life."

"Gurdon," interjected the girl, "be careful—"

"You mind your own business, Starr," he answered roughly. "There's only one way to handle these buckskins."

David strode to the side of the road where the driver's whip had fallen, picked it up, and presented it butt foremost. His right hand rested significantly upon the horn and silver handle of his hunting knife.

"All right, mister," he said with more than his accustomed drawl, "you got your whip, let's see how you down country gentlefolks handle us buckskins. I'm a-warnin' you, though, the first move you make I'll haul you out o' thar an' cut the heart out from behind that purty weskit o' yours."

The man blanched to the roots of his hair, but his countenance showed no other evidence of alarm, only a deepening of its natural mask of contemptuousness. For a moment David thought that his challenge would be accepted, but suddenly the driver jerked the reins and made a chirruping sound with his lips. As horse and equipage disappeared

from the cut Old Tom capered and gave vent to a cracked war whoop.

"Davy, I'm proud o' ye," he cackled. "Maybe ye haven't the blood o' the Braddees in ye, but ye got their spirit, an' ye know durn well how to kill y'r own snakes. The way ye stood up to that pie-eyed scullion done my ol' heart good. It put me in mind—"

David stooped and picked up an object from the ground. It was an oblong shaped piece of stiffened brocade with two holes slit in it and ribbons tied to the ends.

"What is it, gaffer?"

The old man turned the brocade over in his hand. "Must be one o' them thar ridin' masks what the quality ladies use down country. I mind seein' 'em in Philadelphia oncet when I was on a scout thar."

David took back the mask and examined it as they made their way on up the cut. He could not recall that he had given the girl more than a passing glance but now her every feature seemed to come back before his eyes, the delicate oval of her face, the wistful droop of her full, badly formed lips, and the brooding depths of her violet eyes set in deep unhealthy sockets. Her bonnet had been knocked awry when the gig stopped and strands of straight, pale hair had escaped from its concealment.

By now David and the old man had reached Water Street. They turned down river past the tavern and commission houses that squatted under its poplars and locusts. Water Street was defined by the line of houses on one side and the river bank on the other; sometimes the two came so close together that there was not even room for a wagon to pass. Between the stoops of the houses and the bedraggled weeds on the brow of the bank wavered a complicated pattern of ruts in which short-haired mongrels and lanky shoats nosed for garbage.

David thrust the mask into his hunting shirt. Not a very attractive gal, he thought. Not half the piece the sloe-eyed gal was. He prided himself upon his objective view of women and tried to dismiss her from his mind. But she wouldn't go. The pathetic mouth and the brooding eyes seemed to tug at him somewhere down inside. That was a new experience to David and he wasn't sure he liked it. Maybe what he needed was a slug of whiskey.

Before he could make up his mind Old Tom spied some of his cronies sitting on a bench overlooking the river. The old boys cackled obscenely when they saw David and he wondered if they knew about the sloe-eyed gal.

"Why, Davy," said one of them, eyeing his broadened frame, "you've become a man."

"That thar huntin' shirt'll knock out the gals' eyes," leered another one.

David blushed and turned away abruptly. It never did no good to fire back at old gaffers like them—nothing ever seemed to faze them. They sort of banked on being too old to fight. He hoped before he got like that some Injun's bullet would get him.

Old Tom sat down on the bench and on a sudden impulse David turned up the street. The Starr gal would be on the beach somewhere near the movers.

Early as the hour was, all Pittsburgh's thousand or more inhabitants seemed to be astir. That in itself was not unusual but Sam Brady's impending trial had brought to town hundreds of country people. Brady was one of the most popular men in the region, and his prowess as an Indian fighter had already become a legend in spite of his youth. Some time before he and several companions while out scouting for General Wayne had fallen in with a party of Delawares on Beaver River and had, in the approved frontier fashion, promptly erased them. The

question to be decided now, and the one on which Brady's life hinged, was whether the dead Indians had been friends of the whites or hostiles.

Many country people, after the immemorial custom of humanity on such occasions, had combined business with pleasure and were exhibiting their produce in the market house on the river bank at the foot of Market Street. Wicker cages of fowls, racks of hickory-smoked bacon and hams, crocks of butter, baskets of straw-packed eggs, squares of country linen, linsey-woolsey as coarse as bed ticking, home-tanned deer skins and cow hides, and assortments of basketry and wooden ware vied for attention. The men folk, lanky and unkempt, stood around in knots and talked politics and Indian affairs or inveighed against Mr. Hamilton's "axcise" on whiskey while they spat floods of tobacco juice. The women, as lean and brown as their men and with the joy of living wrung out of them by years of struggle with savage wilderness and even more savage red men, bargained shrewdly with the calico-clad townswomen who had turned out in force with their market baskets.

The babel of dialects that smote David's ears as he walked slowly up Water Street disclosed the cosmopolitan origin of the people of the region. Most easily recognizable were the dialects of Ireland, Lowland Scotland, and the Pennsylvania Dutch counties, but the vulgar speech had already settled into a common denominator in which could best be detected the hard *r* and the short *a* of the Scots-Irishman and the modification of the Southern drawl that were to follow the frontier to the Pacific. It was a curious mixture of broad and short *a*'s, of transposed vowels, and of pronunciations and words once rampant in Elizabethan England but now hiding in the provinces or in Ireland.

On the bank above the immigrant boats David stopped and looked over the scene of confusion below. A stream of

women and children were carrying crates of poultry and boxes and bags from a line of makeshift huts on the bank farther upstream. Men were coaxing the last refractory horses and cattle aboard the flats or chocking plows and wagon beds on the roofs, so they would not be thrown into the river by sudden lurches of the boats. Pigs squealed raucously, bewildered cows moored plaintively, and a boastful hen cackled that she had made her latest potential contribution to posterity. On the roof of a flatboat a benevolent, spectacled grandmother sat in a low rocker and knitted a gray sock as complacently as if going West were an old story to her—as indeed it may have been.

David shared the old lady's indifference to the last touches of preparation for departure and sought the occupants of the gig, which was standing on the outskirts of the scurrying movers a little upstream from David's stance. The man was watching the scene with an elaborate show of boredom but the girl seemed frankly interested. The ribbons of her bonnet were loosened and it had fallen back on her shoulders so that her pale hair now seemed nothing more mature than the tow color of childhood. Perhaps with time it would become brown or golden. Her face, too, seemed younger than before and the youthfulness was only accentuated by the struggle it showed between childish curiosity and womanly reserve. The way in which the eager light died out of her eyes whenever she turned to her impassive companion tugged that newly-found string down inside David's breast. He half wished he had forced a fight on the girl's father. It would have done the old son of a bitch good to get cut up a little or to have had an eyeball spread over his face.

David was biting a fresh chew from his twist of tobacco when something struck him in the leg. He stooped and retrieved a small, leather-covered ball. A boy shouted and

David threw the ball to him with an expert underhanded toss. Then at his beckoning gesture the lad came across the street.

"Who's that man down thar in the gig?"

"Cap'n Thorne," said the boy. "That's Mrs. Thorne with him."

Mrs. Thorne! David blinked. He might of known it. "He's a newcomer here, ain't he?"

"Yep. Came last summer, all the way over the mountains in that gig. I heerd he was from Baltimore. Him an' Mr. Anshutz is buildin' a iron furnace out the Philadelphy Road."

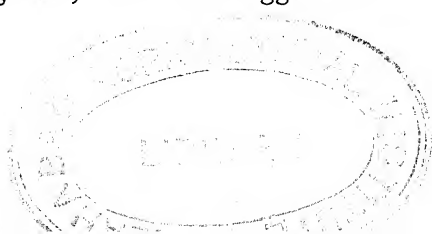
"I seen you bring in the 'Elzie,'" said the boy. "It was a bang-up job, too. I'm going to be a keeler some day."

"That so?" responded David absently. Starr, Captain Thorne had called her. Starr Thorne. It sounded purty, even if it was her married name. He was used to little gals like her being married to middle-aged men, but this seemed different. Maybe they ought to be a law ferninst it. Oh, hell! He was gettin' as bad at runnin' off inside as Old Tom was outside.

"Them movers is Methodists," the boy was saying. "A hull congregation of 'em goin' to Fort Washin'ton. The big man in the center is Reverend Daniel Strong, their preacher. Guess they must be about ready to set off."

The confusion around the flats had ceased. Every last box and barrel and crate of chickens had been stowed. The broad-bladed sweeps had been run into the tholes at sides and rear and nothing remained to be done except to pull in the gangplanks, cast off the painters, and push out into the stream. But instead of setting out, the movers were gathering on the beach around a drift log on which stood one of the strangest looking men David had ever set eyes on.

He was more than a big man, he was the biggest man



David had ever seen, and he had seen plenty. He was dressed in trousers and coat of "copperas cloth," that bilious product of home weaving dyed with copperas, alum, and walnut bark. Not that his dress was unusual—it was even a cut above the average frontier dress, as if the ministerial office demanded better clothes than ordinary. It was the physical appearance of the man that was remarkable. His massive shoulders and hands denoted immense strength and endurance, but his power was best set forth in a head that would have been laughable in anyone else. It was an enormous head with a bulging forehead, unkempt hair, blue jaws, bushy brows, and piercing eyes. He was a man, said his followers, fitted to shake sinners over hell and pluck them as brands from the burning.

But David, ignorant of Methodist jargon, knew nothing of this aptly mixed metaphor as he watched Daniel Strong face the river and lift his great hands for silence. Even the cattle and poultry seemed to feel the spell of that demand, thought David uneasily. The congregation, old and young alike, knelt in the mud and sand around the drift log and the men and boys removed their hats and placed them on the ground. The old woman rocking on the roof of the flatboat took off her spectacles, folded her hands in her lap, and bowed her head. The preacher sank beside the log on bent knees but his straightened hips made him almost as tall as an ordinary man, so that he could easily look out over the heads of the worshippers. His enormous hands once more were raised and his big ugly face turned skyward.

"Almighty God," he said in a voice possessed of a peculiar resonant sweetness, "we cannot embark upon this voyage with its unknown dangers without pausing to commend our souls and our bodies to Thee."

"Amen!" responded a voice from the congregation, and

David, startled, sought the speaker. No one seemed disturbed, the preacher least of all. Ejaculations of "Amen" and "Alleluia" punctuated the remainder of the prayer at every pause.

"Thou hast brought us thus far," said Daniel Strong, "through perils of men and nature, over mountain paths beset by wild storms and beasts and wilder men, and set our feet together in this way. Go on with us, we pray, to our new homes. We venture our frail barks upon these mighty inland waters secure in the knowledge that He that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps. If God be for us who can be against us! Thy Son has promised that if we trust in Him, not even the gates of hell shall prevail against us. Oh, Thou who didst speak to the waters and bid them be still, walk beside us, we pray, and temper the winds and the waters to our passing. Bring us safe through without leaving a hoof behind.

"Sanctify every song that is sung or word that is spoken, bless every hand that is laid to a sweep, guide every eye that sights along a rifle barrel to protect us from the savage foe. May the lions that beset us on either side be chained like those that beset the Pilgrim in his journey from the City of Destruction to the Heavenly Jerusalem.

"We go, O Lord, to seek a delectable country, the earthly type of that delectable country of the soul for which we hunger daily. As we set our plows to its flower-strewn meadows to raise corn for our children, and as we build our homes beneath its graceful elms and spreading maples, may we not forget Thee and Thy bountiful mercies to us. May we remember that this delectable country and all its gardens, and orchards, and vineyards, and fountains of water wherein we drink and wash ourselves are Immanuel's and that we are his sheep, for whom He laid down His life.

"We ask these things, oh God, in the name of Thy blessed

Son who when He was here on earth taught us to pray:

"Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen."

It was the first time in his life that David had heard the Lord's Prayer, and as its solemn phrases fell from the lips of the congregation he felt something strange and heavy stirring within him. Who were these queer people with their gigantic moon-struck leader who spoke of a delectable country of the soul? There was a tightness in David's throat and a blur before his eyes as the prayer ended and the minister once more mounted the drift log. Some of the congregation were sobbing, some laughing, almost hysterically, but there was not a dry eye among them.

"To your ships, oh Israel!" cried the mighty voice of Daniel Strong. "Cast off the shore lines and launch out into the deep. We shall see what the Lord hath in store for us."

The company scattered to the boats. The ropes were loosened as the women and children hastened aboard. Some of the men stood on the decks and thrust at the bank with heavy poles while others stood in the water and strained to push their boats from the mud. The leading flat downstream, aided by the massive shoulders of the minister, was the first to break loose and work its way from the shore as the men labored at the sweeps to get it into the current. Another broke loose, and then another. Presently all eight were free and striving to take their places in line.

Daniel Strong stood upon the deck of his boat and raised his hands. Every eye in the little fleet save for those busy

at the sweeps was fastened upon him. His resonant voice rang out above the river's murmur and easily carried back to the last boat.

There is a land of pure delight,
Where saints immortal reign:
Infinite day excludes the night,
And pleasures banish pain.

As he ended the last word the voices of the movers rose in song, every man, woman, and child joining.

Then came again the deeply solemn voice of Daniel Strong:

There everlasting spring abides,
And never-with'ring flow'rs:
Death, like a narrow sea, divides
This heav'nly land from ours.

But the congregation gave their leader no chance to line the remainder of the hymn as the voices swelled on with the flood in Watts' immortal stanzas. Not a soul there but was conscious of the striking parallel between the pioneer concept of the new country down river and the Christian concept of the life beyond death. Despite their confidence in the future there was scarcely a dry eye in the band as they saw themselves being severed from the old life almost as completely as death could sever them from this world. Even the men at the sweeps joined in the hymn while they walked back and forth across the deck, two at a sweep.

Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood
Stand dressed in living green;
So to the Jews old Canaan stood,
While Jordan rolled between.

THE DELECTABLE COUNTRY

But timorous mortals start and shrink
 To cross this narrow sea;
 And linger, shivering on the brink,
 And fear to launch away.

O could we make our doubts remove,
 Those gloomy thoughts that rise,
 And see that Canaan that we love,
 With unclouded eyes!
 Could we but climb where Moses stood,
 And view the landscape o'er,
 Not Jordan's stream, nor death's cold flood,
 Should fright us from the shore.

By now the boats were well out in the stream and able to progress in the not inconsiderable current of the Monongahela. Some of the women were still weeping, whether because of the emotions stirred by the hymn or because their last connection with the old home was being broken. One or two were standing with lifted hands and shining faces shouting. Suddenly the sweet, clear tones of a woman's voice rose over the fleet, singing the marching song of Methodism:

Guide me, O thou great Jehovah,
 Pilgrim thro' this barren land:

Voice after voice took up the hymn until it had spread to every boat.

I am weak but thou art mighty;
 Hold me with thy pow'ful hand:
 Bread of heaven,
 Feed me till I want no more.

The movers were receding rapidly now, but David could still faintly distinguish the words floating back from the last boats:

When I tread the verge of Jordan,
 Bid my anxious fears subside;
Bear me through the swelling current;
 Land me safe on Canaan's side:
 Songs of praises
I will ever give to thee.

The leading boats were at the meeting of the waters now and the men were laboring at the sweeps to keep from being thrown upon the south shore by the rush of the Allegheny. But in the first boat, no more than a tiny point against the blue sky, stood Daniel Strong pointing the way to the delectable country.

Chapter 3

S UDDENLY DAVID FOUND HIMSELF SLIDING DOWN THE BANK on hip and elbow while he grasped at roots and shrubs in a vain effort to stop. At some point in the descent he had swallowed his quid, fortunately a small one. A mocking laugh rang out above him as he came to rest on the beach amid a small avalanche of dirt and gravel. David looked up angrily at the spot where he had been sitting. Peering down at him he saw a pair of merry blue eyes that offered a startling contrast to the sunburned blackness of the round face in which they were set, while under them a generously large mouth was spread wide in noisy laughter.

"Mike Fink!" cried David. "I might a-knowed it was you. You old alligator, you, I got a good mind to come up thar and tan yore hide fer a pair o' breeches. You made me swaller my chaw."

Mike made a derisory gesture with thumb to nose. "That fer you, Dave Braddee," he said. "It takes more'n a skittish colt to lick a stallion."

David looked up from his examination of knees and elbows and his eyes narrowed. Was Mike bringing up the matter of the sloe-eyed gal? No, he decided, not yet anyhow. He'd better not, either, or there'd be a fight that'd make Old Tom think the old wars was back.

Wheels crunched behind him and Captain Thorne's gig spun past. David turned and the driver lifted his hat and inclined his head in a mocking bow while his thin lips parted in a grin. David had half a mind to pull him out of the rig and teach him a lesson, but when he saw the girl's

wistful look fastened on him he hesitated, and before he could make up his mind it was too late unless he wanted to take out after them. Maybe he was wrong, but damn if the gal's eyes didn't look as if she was pleading with him. He'd heard tales from the older men about how a woman could wrap a feller around her finger. Maybe this gal was like that. At least for him. Maybe he'd be willing to sacrifice even his honor for her, like he'd heard of men doing. The idea filled him with disgust and yet with a curious sneaking pride. For the first time he was aware that women might be worth something more than for raising families or furnishing relaxation for boatmen on a lark.

Mike's insistent voice broke into his reverie. "What's ailin' you, Dave? You act like you got buck fever."

David backed away, then with a sudden spurt ran up the well nigh perpendicular bank. Mike's extended hands grasped his and helped him over the edge. The two young men eyed each other narrowly. They were almost a perfect match, each a little over middle height, their muscles lean and tense as twisted wires. Each stood with his feet apart as if he were poised for any emergency and his shoulders were carried with the defiant swing of a generation that had not yet forgotten how to care for itself in the wilderness. But their resemblance stopped at the tops of their hunting shirts. Mike was round-faced, black-haired, possessed of a quick-tempered, imperious good humor, and his forehead was unfurrowed by a serious thought; David was horse-faced, his skin was pink under the tan, there was a glint of auburn in his hair, and his blue eyes were those of a dreamer—a sure-footed dreamer, asserted his competent features and self-confident body.

"What you been doing for yourself, Mike?" said Dave.

"Scoutin' with Wayne," answered Mike.

"That so? What's the matter? Wayne run out of fighting men?"

"Aye. He said he wanted a man with hair on his chest to come along and show them goddam boatmen he got in the Legion how to fight."

"Did you do any fighting?"

"Naw! Just slushed around through the woods all winter with Sam Brady and some other galoots. Got shot at a few times, but I never seen a wild Injun all the time I was out."

"Well, I seen plenty," said David, feeling a pleasant glow of superiority. "A whole passel of them jumped us at the Watch Tower and like to have sent us to kingdom come."

"That a fact!" said Mike enviously.

David ran an exploratory finger over his scalp and indicated a spot. "Creased me a little here. 'Bout healed up now."

"Let's get us a drink," said Mike suddenly.

"Don't care if I do," agreed David.

They started down Water Street toward the Greentree Tavern and had reached the point where the Wood Street cut made a deep depression in the street when a squad of blue-coated soldiers debouched from Wood Street. At the sight Mike suddenly darted behind a house and disappeared. The soldiers swung by and Mike reappeared.

"What's the matter, Mike?" chaffed David. "You scouts skeered of soldiers?"

"Naw, it ain't that so much. I jist clared out o' Fort Harmar without leave and I ain't ready to go back."

"What did you do that for?"

"On account of Sam Brady's trial."

"I see." They entered the taproom of the tavern and found seats with difficulty. Court day had brought a rush of customers to the Greentree, most of them prosperous farmers and country squires.

"I'd've thought they'd've tried Sam Brady long ago and got it over with," said David. "Why it must've been two years since he massacred them Injuns. It was old stuff long afore we went to N'Orleans."

Mike spat disgustedly on the floor. "Sure. There wouldn't had ter be no trial ef it hadn't been fer these damn down country gentry. They seem ter set a heap o' store by bein' legal."

Mike called for cold dodger and ham to stay their stomachs while they waited for court to convene. They used their hunting knives to cut off slices of the ham and ate it from one hand while they held the dodger in the other. Once in a while one of them would set down his dodger and have a swig of Monongahela rye. They drank it almost as freely as they would have drunk coffee, but it seemed to have little effect on them.

Mike crammed into his mouth a chunk of dodger that would have given an ordinary man the lockjaw.

"Davy," he said, "how's the gals in Orleans? I hear it's one teetotaciously hifalutinatin' place."

New Orleans suddenly assumed to David a romantic aspect that he had not recognized even when he was there.

"Mannee!" he said. "They wasn't foolin' you none. It's the wonderfulest place in the world, what with the women, and the ships, and the owdaciously big church. I never seed such a place fer church bells. Why thar was one a-ringin' every hour of the day, I hope to be shot if they warn't, and goin' in and out of the church was strings of boys and men dressed up in lace petticoats and carryin' lighted candles and Christ-on-a-cross. And the songs they sung! They was wuss nor any Irish wake I ever seed."

"You don't say," observed Mike, interested.

"And the whores, boy! Thar was forty to a house. They made Lo'ville look like a Methody meetin' house. They was

all decked out in gold earrings and their skirts had gold spangles on 'em fit for Christmas. They'd stand on the bars and buck and roll their bellies until it'd fair drive a man crazy to watch 'em. You couldn't pass a doorway without one of 'em clinching onto you and trying to pass you a little free sample of what she could do if you'd only give her a chanct."

"Mannee, I'm goin' to Orleans the minute I git shet of scoutin' Injuns in the Tarritory," announced Mike. "I hear tell the gals thar all got nigger blood in 'em."

"Maybe so," said David. "They're all dark complected like and that's fact, but they might be white at that. Anyway, them *fams* know their business and that's more than you can say fer the gals here."

David uttered the last sentiment with an air of sophistication that vastly impressed Mike, or perhaps he was floored for the nonce by the unfamiliar word. Just at that moment a drum began beating in the street.

"The judges!" cried Mike.

There was a surge of customers to the door, but David and Mike led the press. A solemn procession was coming up Water Street from Ormsby's Tavern, where the supreme court justices made their headquarters when on tour. Dennis Loughy, the blind poet of the town, went first, tapping rhythmically upon his drum and stepping out with a sureness of foot that belied his blindness. He was barefooted and dirty with a week-old beard flecked with brown stains, but he had made a pathetic attempt at military smartness by donning an old blue army coat with half the buttons gone and the remaining ones encrusted with green mold. After the drummer walked Sheriff Ewalt, bearing a white wand, and after him marched the supreme court justices, Thomas McKean and Jasper Yeates, meticulously clad in black with sedately cocked hats and spotless white lawn

neckcloths. The justices marched abreast, eyes to the front as the solemnity of the occasion warranted, but with frequent uneasy glances at the footing, for there was an ever-present possibility of stumbling in a rut or slipping on the offal that littered the street.

After them came the attorneys, two abreast. There were half a dozen of them present. John Woods, a handsome, portly man of about forty, was the state's attorney and came directly after the justices with his opponent, Hugh Henry Brackenridge. The latter was a tall man in the middle forties, with black hair, full sardonic features, and eyes deep-set under bushy brows. His black clothes were rumpled and his neckcloth spotted and ill-adjusted, yet there was a smoldering fire in his dark face and black eyes that betrayed the man of genius and set him apart from the run of mine lawyers around him.

Doubtless the orderly citizens of Pittsburgh were duly impressed by the procession, but the boatmen and country people who lounged along the way were scornful of such aristocratic fol-de-rol. Your westerner was a leveller by birth and environment, and he looked with contempt and resentment upon any manifestation of social or official superiority. The procession reached the bustling marketplace and turned into Market Street while the throng of idlers pressed close. A big keeler called Bull Canady began to stamp his foot on the heavy beats of the drum. His companions joined him and soon the whole crowd had followed their example. The prank seemed to put the throng in a good humor, though a few ultra-irreverent souls shouted insulting quips at the justices. The officials refused to take cognizance of the people's behavior but marched on to Andrew Watson's big log tavern only a block from the river.

The sheriff led the way up a flight of rough puncheon steps on the outside of the house to a large room where the

court was to be held. When the lawyers had gone up a deputy tried to bar the stairs to the crowd, but the group of boatmen burst through, followed by David and Mike.

In the courtroom were gathered the principal men of the county, including most of the office holders. They were standing respectfully—as a matter of fact there were no chairs for the spectators—while the justices donned their red robes of office. The room was scarcely more than twenty feet square and was open to the rafters at the top. A long deal table accommodated judges and counsel, and a rough bench was set for the jury.

"Oyez, oyez," said the tipstaff. "The honorable court of Oyer and Terminer and Gaol Delivery for the County of Allegheny is now in session. Chief Justice McKean and Justice Yeates presiding."

A deputy brought the prisoner from an inner room and honored him with a chair at his counsel's end of the table. He was a young man, scarcely in the middle thirties, but had been active in the Indian wars since the beginning of the Revolution. Even in repose the very set of his shoulders and the cool unconcern in his eyes bespoke the self-sufficient arrogance of a man inured to the independent life of the wilderness. He observed the process of selecting jurymen with indifference. Not even the charges presented by the state's attorney moved him. Perhaps it was evident to him as it was to everyone else that the prosecution lacked conviction and that the day's proceedings were being held merely to satisfy certain legal technicalities prized by the down country gentlemen who governed the state.

The audience shifted uneasily while the proceedings droned on hour after hour. Lawyer Brackenridge produced witnesses from the inner room to testify that despite the treaties between the Indian tribes and the United States certain Delaware banditti had stolen horses, harassed boats

on the river, and murdered citizens in certain outlying settlements and looted their cabins. It was proved that Sam Brady's pursuing party had found this loot in the possession of the Delawares that they had trailed and killed. Mr. Woods objected perfunctorily to this and that and Chief Justice McKean weightily overruled him. The boatmen commented blatantly upon the proceedings and were admonished by the court while the sheriff trembled lest he be called upon to expel the recalcitrants.

When Brackenridge rose to make his address to the jury it was only to add the finishing touches to a structure that had already been raised. "Your honors, and gentlemen of the jury," he said, "my remarks do not need to be extensive nor will they be. You have heard witnesses testify, and that without successful contradiction, that the Indians which the prisoner is accused of having murdered had engaged in scalping raids upon white settlements and that they were caught with the plundered goods in their camp. Gentlemen, the defense admits the charge. Samuel Brady is guilty of the death of a band of blood-thirsty savages who descended upon these settlements determined to burn, steal, and slay, and who were arrested in their course only because of the skill and daring of the man arraigned before you."

The lawyer turned so that his sardonic eyes swept both prisoner and jurymen and his hand went up in a gesture of homage. His sardonic smile gave way to wrathful indignation and under the scourge of his oratory even his political foes forgot their dislike of him.

"Prisoner at the bar," he cried, "I salute you! While we have remained warm and safe at our firesides you have bared your breast to the savage foe in our defense. Times without number you have ventured alone into the wilderness to spy upon the enemy. You have floundered over the snow-blocked trails week after week, your feet and your

hands frozen by the bitter wind, your sleeping place the lee of a fallen tree with no fire to comfort you, and in the morning only a mouthful of jerked venison and a handful of parched corn to sustain life. You have neglected your crops and left your family unprotected while you lay for days in the chilling rain waiting to detect the silent tread of the moccasined raider. You have lost your loved ones to the scalping knife of the savage, yet no grief has delayed you in being the first to answer the call to arms and the last to leave the field; you have run the brutal gantlet for the sport of the savages and been delivered from the torture stake only by a miracle. Prisoner at the bar, lift your hands that we may see the scars on your wrists, draw back your hunting shirt that we may see the angry stripes where you were beaten with red-hot ramrods.

"These, gentlemen of the jury, are the only badges of honor that are awarded in this warfare. You see before you a man who has sacrificed himself for us in his own human way as truly as Christ crucified himself for us in his divine way. This race of heroes is passing, driven away from us by our own ingratitude, as much as by the vengeful tomahawk of the red man. We repay them for their noble generosity by stealing their lands, by starving their children, by throwing them into chains for the very acts for which we should be forever grateful. We no longer breed heroes. We have become a race of plowboys, and clerks, and—yes, let me say it—lawyers. The frontier is leaving us behind and with it are passing those virtues of forthright courage, of independence, and of neighborly generosity. Let us not add another point to the long account of ingratitude with which we have repaid our benefactors.

"Gentlemen of the jury, I ask you to declare this man 'not guilty' without leaving the room. Your honors, the defense rests."

For a long moment there was a stunned silence in the bare little courtroom, then an uncontrollable burst of applause swept the audience. The gentry forgot their animosity to Brackenridge as they beat their hands till they hurt. The boatmen stamped and whistled and shouted until they were hoarse. By God, here was one lawyer that knew a man when he saw one. Why wasn't he in Philadelphia making laws, instead of them pulling down country land sharks and counter jumpers?

The justices conferred until the tumult had subsided; then McKean charged the jury briefly upon the law covering the case and asked if it wished to retire. The foreman rose immediately.

"Your honor," he said, "we'uns all say 'not guilty.'"

Pandemonium broke out again as the boatmen, ignoring the judge's gavel, surged around Sam Brady and swept him from the room. In the street below they raised him to their shoulders and began a victory parade toward the river while Market Street quickly filled up behind them with citizens and country people.

The court's session came to an end with much less dignity than it had begun. The drummer was dismissed, for the justices had no mind to try to parade back through the seething mob. Rather they left quietly by a back stairway and made their way to Ormsby's by a circuitous route.

The members of the audience crowded about Brackenridge for a moment and congratulated him upon his brilliant defense; he received their praise awkwardly, the sardonic smile playing once more on his lips. Their dislike of him renewed, the gentlemen quickly made excuses and hurried away. A shame, they thought as they went, that a man with the legal and literary genius of Brackenridge and with his platform presence should be such a dour and sarcastic fellow. If he'd only spruce up his dress now, and

act as if he were glad to see his betters, he might go a long way.

But to the tavern now, for their throats were dry. Let the hoi-polloi march in the streets and yell themselves hoarse, let Old Hughie sulk in the courtroom—the proper place for gentlemen of respectability was the assembly room of John Ormsby's tavern.

Brackenridge stepped to a window and looked down upon the eddying crowd. He felt alone, a figure of tragedy, and yet somehow he took a morbid pleasure in it. A few steps down to the street and he knew that he would be received as a popular hero. He would be led into the tavern and toasted, and perhaps there would be those who would hint obliquely that he should once more be seeking public office. He had a muddled belief in democracy and an inborn sympathy with the people, but for some reason he could not bring himself to mingle with them at his ease. He could no more venture down there, he reflected wryly, without a couple of stiff drinks under his waistcoat than he could bring himself to venture into a cage of bears.

Yet every fiber of his being was calling out for adulation. Why in God's name couldn't he conquer this unsocial awkwardness that drove him into a panic when he was in the presence of others and made him remain as silent as a bound boy at a husking or else break out with a scorching word or witticism that did nothing but win him enemies?

God, what wouldn't he give to be able to correct the errors of his term in the legislature. He had spent five years in Coventry because of them and was only beginning to win his way back into popular favor. True, he had become a literary figure after a fashion. His *Modern Chivalry*, in which a Pennsylvania countryman named Captain Farrago went about preaching the literate democracy foreshadowed by Plato, had been favorably compared to *Don Quixote*.

He had introduced a picaresque bogtrotter named Teague O'Regan into the tale both for comical and moral effect, and he had intended Teague to be the type not simply of the ignorant farmer, but of the unlettered man of wealth and the man who might be a fool though he read Latin. Brackenridge chuckled mirthlessly at the thought of the storm his book had stirred up among the gentry and pompous asses in general.

Well, *Modern Chivalry* had probably gained him as many enemies as admirers. That seemed to be the case with anything to which he laid his hand or his tongue. At any rate he was the undoubted leader of the western bar. But that was nothing to boast of, he mused bitterly. It arose from a sympathetic touching, not too subtly, upon the farmer's pride in the Indian fighting days of his youth and upon his resentment because the changing order was undermining his old independence and forcing him into debt.

That was the line he had followed this afternoon, and it had worked as it always had. Even the gentlemen of respectability—his smile was brilliantly sardonic at the thought—had applauded. They were westerners under the skin and chafed at the intrusion of down country management in their affairs though they abominated the yokelry's intense insistence upon political and economic rights. Tomorrow the gentry will be wondering just what they had heard to applaud and saying that the old fox has won again. But what do you care for them, Hugh Brackenridge! Being conceited men, they think that is deep which they cannot fathom.

The victory parade had doubled on itself and was now retracing its course on Market Street. The crowd was a little drunker and if anything a little noisier. The blind drummer was tapping out the step at the head of the parade. His green bound cap was awry and he rolled a

little in his gait as if liquid persuaders had been used to sweeten the task. Big Matt turned and pointed his black whiskers defiantly at Coal Hill as he blew a long mournful note on his boatsman's horn. At his side marched Old Tom, ready to trade the last two weeks of his life for a chance to sit down and rest, but too proud to let his back bend from its ramrod straightness. A score of boatmen formed the nucleus of the parade, and Sam Brady still rode the shoulders of two of the tallest.

There was a change, however, in the tone of the rejoicing. It was no longer a spontaneous outburst of exultation, but had taken on a deep, savage note, like an animal conscious of its power and eager to meet a challenger. To the observant Brackenridge this note was almost certainly the prelude to the raising of a liberty pole. Strange how the excise served as a peg on which to hang every western grievance. There was a side, undoubtedly, to their opposition to the excise, yet there was something far deeper than this. Already the nation was launched upon the political cycle set forth by Plato in his *Republic*. A new spirit was stirring not only the West, but the whole nation. It was almost like a recurrence of the first blind groping toward revolution twenty-five years ago. Today it is a cloud no bigger than a man's hand; tomorrow the heavens will be black with clouds and wind. God forbid that it be another storm like the last.

It remains to be seen, he thought, whether the gentlemen of respectability shall reap all the fruits of the revolution against Britain or whether we shall build up here in this land a nation in which the common man shall have his day. This town, now, founded by hard-bitten, hair-triggered, realistic Indian traders and army officers has prospered. The founders have loosened their belts as life became easier, and perhaps become a little soft in the head, but

they have formed a tight little aristocracy as galling in its way as that of Philadelphia.

Those faces down there, stupid, vacuous, brutal, passion-ridden, swept with emotion because a popular hero has been released to them. Have they perhaps cried for the release of Barabbas and allowed Christ to be crucified! That blacksmith there in his leather apron, the jeans-clad farmer in the wool hat next to him, the young red-headed boatman in the white doeskin hunting shirt, they all lack the rudder that education and native ability afford.

And yet, he thought, they and a million like them in this new nation have the vote. It is like placing a firebrand in the hand of a child in the crib. Don't you see, Hugh, it is men like you that must help them. Somehow you must find a way to direct that energy to useful ends or they will destroy themselves as the French people are doing even now. Shake off your lethargy and your bitterness. There is work here for a man of education and ability—and ambition.

Chapter 4

IN JOHN ORMSBY'S TAVERN ON THE MONONGAHELA WATER-front that evening gathered a dozen gentlemen of the élite of Pittsburgh. Mine host had decorated the tap-room, which also served as the dining room, with sprays of apple blossoms and redbud in honor of the justices of the supreme court; the roast had been red and juicy, the fowls done to a turn, and now the gentlemen sat about the cleared table puffing their cigars and sipping with the air of connoisseurs the Madeira that sparkled in the French cut glass reserved for special occasions such as this.

The gentlemen of the bar were present, with the conspicuous exception of Brackenridge, and Sheriff Ewalt and Mr. McReady, the local justice of the peace, admitted because of their official positions, hung deferentially upon the weighty words of the lawyers and justices. Dr. Bedford, a sardonic gentleman with iron-gray hair, was being pleasant to the landlord, one of whose daughters he was courting with the hope of falling heir to part of Mr. Ormsby's large landholdings across the Monongahela. Then there were two officers from Fort Fayette, Major William Butler, the commandant, and Lieutenant Repperger. At one side, Tarleton Bates, a serious-faced young man of no more than twenty years, sat silently observant. He had but lately come from Virginia as a clerk in the War Department and was scarcely at home as yet in this wild western country.

General John Neville's rotund bulk was relaxed in a brocaded chair and his shining boots were stretched out toward the fire. He was a hale, gray-haired man of sixty,

with a cheerful twinkle that belied an imperious mouth and chin and that had made him popular with the people before he had accepted the office of inspector of the excise for the fourth survey. The night was not chilly, he admitted, but an old man's extremities appreciated the warmth. Colonel Presley Neville, his son and a handsome, good-humored man who was the nearest to the aristocratic ideal that the village afforded, gracefully flicked the ash from his cigar with a strong tapering finger, and talked politely to Major Isaac Craig, who had begun life as an Irish ship carpenter but had made his way by sheer ability into positions as deputy quartermaster general in the United States Army at Pittsburgh and son-in-law to General Neville. Lieutenant Repperger was recounting to any who cared to listen his hunting adventures of the morning down river. The three turkeys that had lately graced the board and whose remains were now being gnawed by the kitchen help had been part of his bag.

At a small table by a window the Thornes were finishing their supper. The captain had planned to join the party but since he and Mrs. Thorne had been late in returning from a visit to the iron furnace, he had chosen to dine apart. The two had eaten silently as was their wont, and since there had been no conversation to delay them they finished soon after the others. Captain Thorne lifted his wine glass to his lips and tasted it with the air of an expert. Yes, it distinctly was better than common. Arrived that morning from New Orleans by keelboat, Ormsby had said. At the thought of mine host Captain Thorne's lips curled. These western concepts of what constituted a gentleman were beyond him. Apparently no birth nor breeding was necessary. One only needed to be first on the spot and manage to wheedle a few thousand acres from a drunken Indian chief to rank as a gentleman. The Nevilles now, and young

Bates, perhaps they had some pretensions, but here was a tavern-keeper, an estimable enough man otherwise, ranking himself with the gentry. Back in Baltimore, now— His mind veered away. He didn't like to think of Baltimore any more. Perhaps he was getting to be like these buckskin gentry. At the mere thought he shuddered.

"Are you cold, Gurdon?"

Thorne came back to the inn. His hard bright eyes focussed slowly upon his wife, and there was in them a look of distaste. He despised her for her pale hair and colorless face, for the timidity and unresponsiveness that was always shaming him before the world. He made no answer and she dropped her luminous eyes to her wine glass. She had long ago become used to being ignored, but that did not stop the lump that rose in her throat nor the mist that clouded her eyes.

He lifted his glass and saw that he had drained it. Strange, he could remember only the first sip. There was no doubt of it. This Monongahela rye was dulling his palate. But at any rate it helped him to forget that he owed everything he had to Starr. Strange that he had to have whiskey to make him forget. It proved at least that he was not the hardened villain people would take him to be if they knew about that episode in Lancaster. How easily Starr had been duped. He passed his hand over his forehead to hide the flush that came at the recollection. God! How he had haggled with the old tavern woman, her aunt, over the division of Starr's inheritance. And what he had done after that was even worse. There were nights when he woke up in a cold sweat after dreaming that the law had caught up with him.

He had always sought out lively, full-bodied women in the past, but now, at least in the sight of the world, he was chained to this faded tavern slavey. He resented that as well

as his dependence upon her fortune. Down underneath he knew that he didn't deserve a girl like Starr—perhaps that was why his whole life seemed to be turning into a current of resentment against her, cold and sullen when he was sober, bitter and cruel when he was in liquor. At times he had played with the thought of putting her out of the way, but always rejected it. Those haunting eyes of hers would follow him to the grave, he knew, and besides he was no murderer. No, the girl and the fortune were linked together; perhaps if he ever lost the money he could leave her. He smiled at the thought of the bogus marriage lines he carried in his pocketbook. Well, she thought she was his wife, and what she didn't know wouldn't hurt her.

A faint shout from the Diamond drifted in from the darkness along with the scent of the redbud tree before the open window.

"There is a vast difference between liberty and license," observed someone, and the gentlemen smiled and nodded as much as to say that here ordered liberty and its responsibilities were well understood.

"It's a pity so few know the distinction," said Mr. Ormsby, rubbing some leaf tobacco between his palms.

"What is that distinction?" said Justice McKean absently. He was a handsome, slightly heavy man of middle age, with all the pontificality of the successful legal light.

"Why, that's simple," answered Presley Neville. "Liberty is comprehended by obedience to just laws; license is the spirit that would break over them—as our friends out there are in imminent danger of doing." He waved his cigar airily in the direction of the Diamond.

"But," rejoined the chief justice, "who decides what laws are just?"

"Aha! You're trying to trap me, sir. But I'll spring your trap. That law is just which meets the approval of the

wealth and breeding of the community, and the pattern has been well set for us by the federal constitution."

"Does that not predicate then, Colonel, that wealth and breeding will approve the laws that benefit them without regard to the welfare of the common people?"

"Aye, that it will, your honor. But who can propose a better standard? That which benefits the gentry is in itself for the good of the yokelry."

A gust wafted another segment of the popular clamor into the room.

"Perhaps they do not agree," said the chief justice significantly.

Colonel Neville shrugged. "It is for gentlemen to watch over the laws that we have gained with so much bloodshed and expense."

"But they, too, shed their blood—and they pay taxes even as we do."

"Your honor, you are not taking the popular side!"

"No, Colonel. Hardly yet, at least. I but endeavor to point out that the situation has no simple solution. Ever since the French disturbances began there has been a new spirit stirring on this side of the water. We may like it or not as we please, but here it is to be reckoned with. These men have not been free of the status of rebels so long that they would gag at treason once more."

"True enough, Mr. McKean," said General Neville. "Our troubles would be greatly lessened if the French nobility had scotched their revolution at the start."

"Could they have done so? Had not their abuses mounted so high that even heaven must have taken cognizance?"

"Perhaps, perhaps," said the general with a touch of impatience, "but we have nothing here to compare with that."

"Nor did we have before the late war," replied the chief justice. "Yet we revolted."

"Are you implying that there is danger of another revolt here?"

"Not necessarily. Yet the Jacobin societies are sweeping the East and sowing the seed. The West is already a powder barrel. Mr. Hamilton's policies are meeting with opposition everywhere save among the gentry and clergy and the wealthy merchants of the seaboard. It requires no great stretch of the imagination to envision marching men once more."

"God forfend!" said Justice Yeates, who had been listening with interest.

"With all due respect to your opinions, Colonel Neville," said the chief justice, "and understand that I share them, yet we do not set vinegar to catch flies. Your yeoman sees his interest as separate from and paramount to that of the gentry and since he has the vote he will proscribe us utterly unless we yield gracefully."

"We will fight first," said Presley Neville.

"And lose the war as the British king and parliament lost to us. No thanks. I prefer to keep my property and my position. And so would you, upon reflection, Colonel."

"Then what must we do?" asked John Woods.

"We must somehow open the Mississippi to navigation, we must tax unseated lands"—he made a wry face, for that would hit him sorely—"and the federal government must use more finesse in taking over the rights of the states and in laying taxes such as the excise. If that is not done, then we must fight—either in the field or at the polls. And we are doomed to eventual defeat."

"But the rabble is leaderless. What can it do?" put in Lieutenant Reppeger.

"Leaders are coming forth. Mr. Jefferson is devoting himself to the problem and he will yet come up with a solution;



the Jacobin clubs, as I said, are organizing. Why, in your midst here you have a potential leader."

"Who?" The question was so unanimously voiced that a smile ran around the group.

"Why, Hugh Brackenridge."

There was a burst of laughter so unrestrained that the chief justice flushed a little angrily.

"I hope you will pardon us, Mr. McKean," said General Neville at last, "but that old wolf's fangs are drawn. It did look at one time as though he had a future, and on the right side, too, but he made such a hash of things in the legislature that he's done for. Why, he had the effrontery to say when he was remonstrated with that a word from him to the people would set everything straight. They've never forgiven him for it. And the Presbyterian kirk is against him also because he gave up his license to preach and learned to swear, they say. No, your honor, I'm afraid you're backing the wrong horse."

"Very well, gentlemen, you may laugh, but I have noted a few things and when the time comes I shall not let you forget them."

"Pray tell us what they are, Mr. McKean," said young Tarleton Bates gravely. He was the only one in the circle who had not joined in the laughter.

"Well, gentlemen, the temper of the people is plainly evidenced by the events of the day and by the threats to set a liberty pole, about which they are likely engaged now. Mr. Brackenridge, you will not deny, was enthusiastically acclaimed by the people at the trial—and if you will note he is the only gentleman of the bar not here. Was he asked? I doubt it. What more simple than that the people wanting they know not what, accept as a leader a proud and gloomy—and ambitious—man whom you have done your best to insult? A man, moreover, who knows what they want and

knows how to get it better than you know how to prevent him."

The merriment had fled from the faces of the gentlemen of Pittsburgh and something very closely akin to concern had taken its place.

"Your common man," the chief justice went on, "no longer bows and scrapes before gentry as he did in the old days before the war. He knows—whether you do or not—that it was he who took Burgoyne and Cornwallis, not you. He is groping for something better than the state of a European peasant and willy-nilly he is going to find his way to the top. Gentlemen, it is the spirit of the times. You may as well go outside here and try to sweep back the Monongahela with a broom as try to prevent it."

Suddenly the outside door was thrown open. The startled gentlemen turned as if expecting the fulfillment of McKean's prophecy, then sank back in relief as they saw only a young boatman in a white doeskin hunting shirt. The boy hesitated for a moment as his eyes accustomed themselves to the light.

Captain and Mrs. Thorne had finished their wine and had been listening to the conversation on the opposite side of the room, but now she was preparing to go up to their room and leave her husband to join the gentlemen. Both of them recognized the youth and Starr's eyes widened in terror. Had he come to pursue the quarrel with her husband? She had heard terrible stories of cutting and gouging, but surely this boy looked far too nice for that. She felt that her husband was drawing his feet under his chair and flexing his muscles, ready to spring. Terror-stricken, she watched David Braddee approach. The gentlemen across the room were silent, as if they were watching a play. Perhaps it was a play, she thought desperately. Perhaps if she only could move her eyes up or to one side she would

see the outline of the stage. The lad's eyes were fixed on her as he advanced. They bore an unmistakable message, and she knew that Gurdon Thorne was noting the fact.

She's not as homely as I thought, said David to himself. Her hair is gold in the candlelight and there is color in her cheeks and lips. She looks as though she might have been expecting me, yet dreading my coming. How wide and clear her eyes are. And how brooding and frightened. Have no fear, little doe, I have not come to hurt you, only to give you back your riding mask. Take care, warned a deep-seated instinct, her husband is up to no good. Give him the tail of your eye.

The boatman was three feet away now and his eyes were still fixed on hers. His left hand moved toward the folds of his hunting shirt and at that moment Gurdon Thorne sprang. What followed happened so quickly that Starr could hardly comprehend it. The edge of the young man's stiffened right hand shot against her husband's throat and he sank back into his chair groaning and groping at his neck.

The Nevilles and Lieutenant Repperger were across the room in an instant but the boatman, as if he had sensed their hostility from the moment he entered, had his back to the wall behind Starr and was sweeping his hunting knife in a menacing arc. The men fell back.

"You young scallion," roared the general, "what do you mean by entering a decent public house and provoking a fight?"

"Keep a civil tongue in yore head, ginerel," said David calmly. The general gasped.

"Why, you nameless young scoundrel—"

David pointed his knife at the general's prominent midriff.

"Ginerel," he broke in, "nameless I may be, but you've

no call to brag. I've heerd that your daddy was nothing but a 'dentured sarvant in his day. And as for this—" he included Captain Thorne in a sweeping gesture of his left hand, "you'd best know the scent before you give tongue on the trail." He reached into the bosom of his hunting shirt and produced the riding mask, then reached over Starr's shoulder and laid it on the table.

"I was jist going to give this to Starr," he said slowly. "As for him, you must have seen for yourself that he jumped me."

"The lad is right, general," said Mr. McKean, who with the other gentlemen had joined the half circle. "Put up your knife, son. You've my word that we'll not harm you."

"You will not arrest me, either?"

"No, my word on it."

David slowly sheathed his knife. He felt oppressed in there with all those hostile eyes upon him. He was not so dense but what he knew that he had committed the unpardonable crime in striking a gentleman. Gentry stuck together like snakes in a winter den, and he'd be a marked man from now on.

Gurdon Thorne stood up. "I must apologize for my haste, gentlemen," he said, speaking with difficulty. "This lad and I had a misunderstanding this morning, and it was only natural that I should think he was coming to damage me, rather than to do my wife a favor."

Starr was conscious that he spoke to the gentlemen but that his eyes were fixed on her. The boatman had called her Starr, he had acted as if he had a right to walk up to her.

There was a murmur of approval from the gentlemen. Their air of hostility relaxed, and they went back to their table, but she scarcely noticed them. She knew only that Gurdon was a deep man. He was throwing everyone off

the scent—everyone but her. She foresaw with a shudder that she would pay for the young man's familiarity. God, hadn't she enough to bear as it was without adding Gurdon's jealousy to the load? He didn't want her himself, yet he would gloat over her shame now that he knew someone else wanted her.

The boatman was going to the door. The back of his white hunting shirt still showed the mud from his slide over the bank that morning. She had appealed to him then not to make trouble. Now she wanted to shout to him to come back and save her. And yet she didn't even know his name. Gurdon was watching her, she knew, but she could not tear her eyes away. The door opened and the boatman disappeared into the night. Her last hope was gone.

Gurdon Thorne took a long black cigar from his waistcoat pocket and cut the end with a tiny knife that dangled from his watch fob. It still hurt his throat to talk.

"Hadh't you better go upstairs, my dear?" he said with mock solicitude.

Starr turned without a word and went into the hall. A moment later the watching man saw her skirt through the balustrade as she slowly mounted the stairs. He turned and strolled across the room. The smile on his lips might have been pain or pleasure, so inscrutable was it.

Chapter 5

LAWYER BRACKENRIDGE WAS NOT MISTAKEN IN HIS FEELING that the erection of a liberty pole would be the next activity of the mob. Probably no one could have told who was responsible for the suggestion, but when the crowd got tired of parading and repaired to the Diamond a group of men with axes on their shoulders departed to find a suitable tree. Another group began digging a hole in the center of the Diamond while the crowd milled aimlessly about or patronized the surrounding taverns for food or drink.

The last traces of sunset red had faded over Coal Hill and night was mercifully obscuring the squalid cabins of the town when the axemen returned bearing the liberty pole by its half-trimmed branches. The country people had left long since with their families, save for some of the younger men, and it was these farm boys and the boatmen and town mechanics who aided in setting up the pole and raided the wood sheds of the townsmen for material for a bonfire.

Red-skirted women from the bagnios of town and near-by forest began to drift toward the Diamond. The opportunity for easy pickings was not to be ignored.

The bonfire sprang into life and its flames danced lividly upon the half drunk men and the questing women. David Braddee appeared in the door of a paint shop and held up to view a length of white bunting on which he had painted in straggling red capitals the motto "Liberty and no excise." The crowd eddied about him as he walked to the liberty pole. There he laid the bunting carefully on the ground

and slipped out of his white doeskin hunting shirt. A hand reached out of the crowd and took possession of the shirt. It was the sloe-eyed gal.

David closed his eyes. He was so light-headed that he thought he was going to faint. She was still there, etched on the insides of his eyeballs, just as she had always been. Her slanting sloe eyes, purple-black as haws, devoured him with an avidity that he had only half understood in the old days and her red lips were parted as her breath came in short uneven gasps. His head cleared and he opened his eyes. For ten months he had waited for this moment. He had dreamed about it day and night and every other woman he had had was no more than a preparation for the time when he should get back to her. Now that was all gone. *She* had not changed. Something had happened to him. He wondered dully if life was always like this, if pleasure was always to turn to ashes when he reached out to seize it.

Without a word he picked up the bunting and began climbing the pole. His brogans found the hastily trimmed stubs of branches without difficulty and he was soon at the top. His eyes sought the milling crowd below as he felt for the nails he had brought along and thrust them into his mouth. What was he doing up here like a bear on a pole, and what were those men and women doing below? It struck him that he had never stopped before to ask why he did anything.

He gripped the pole with one arm and held the folded end of the bunting in position while he reached for his tomahawk. He had heard many heated arguments on the "axcise," on land speculation, on Injun policies, and the navigation of the Mississippi, but they had meant little or nothing to him. He had accepted the beliefs held by those about him without question. He wondered if they knew any more about such matters than he did. One long sum-

mer day he had laid on his belly in the orchard and watched the bees swarm out of the hive and fasten on a tree over his head, then had brushed them off into a new hive of his own making. Something had made them swarm whether they wanted to or not, only to fall a prey to a greater power.

Maybe he and all them people below was like that. Something dark and indefinable was moving them to cry out against their rulers down country. Maybe when they was ready the down country aristocrats would just sweep them off into the hive as he had the bees. He struck the nail viciously at the thought. By God, here was one buckskin they wouldn't brush off so easy.

He thought of the smug, silk-stockinged gentry foregathered in Ormsby's tavern. By what right had they looked on him like he was the dirt under their feet? He smote the second nail two vicious blows and drove it in to the head. They had stopped their conversation at his entrance as if on purpose to make him feel a galoot. And then they had deliberately baited him—baited him like a bear, as if he didn't have no feelings. Starr had been the only one in the room, he felt, who had not enjoyed it.

He thrilled again as he recalled the look in her eyes. Maybe she didn't belong there any more than he did. That haunted look of hers. Strange things sometimes happened. That Captain Thorne, now, he was the kind of man to make them happen. The man filled him with loathing, and he struck another nail as if it were Captain Thorne's head.

He looked down again at the dark figures below and thought of the bees swarming. He felt light and free up here now, almost as if he was something apart, maybe something that didn't need to obey the spirit of the hive. He was too much a part of the folks around him. Maybe if he went down river he could be free like the long

hunters he had seen loafing around the river front at New Madrid. They didn't give two whoops in a whirlwind what the gover'mint did. The axcise didn't hamper their annual spifflication none, and they could handle the Injuns alone or if they couldn't the torture would soon be over with. As for lands, they didn't want none. All they asked was elbow room to hunt in and be free.

The light of the bonfire flared up and he saw Arcola standing at the foot of the pole holding the white blob of his hunting shirt and staring up at him. The crowd yelled and surged as two boatmen rolled a keg in from Diamond Alley. Bull Canady, probably, throwing away his winter's profits like the wastrel he was. That would be Mike Fink beside him blaring an invitation to all and sundry.

David restored the tomahawk to his belt and began slowly to descend. He felt as if he was going down feet first into the muddy current of the Massassip. They did say that nobody ever came up again once he had gone down into the embrace of the old Father of Waters. Maybe that was what was happening to him now. A gust of wind passed him and he looked up as the bunting lifted feebly and half disclosed the straggling capitals. That was just about the way he felt. He needed a drink, by Jupe, wuss'n a hoss needed a tail.

He put on his hunting shirt slowly and looked at the sloe-eyed gal. She wasn't saying a word, just looking at him all staring-like, as if she wanted to tell him something but couldn't. By Jupe, gals was funny critters. Any other'n would a bust out talking like a fire in a briar patch.

David started toward the whiskey barrel, then half turned back.

"I'll see you at Mother Pearson's," he said.

"When?" She spoke with difficulty.

"'Bout an hour. Mike's with me."

The crowd was packed heavy around the barrel and Bull Canady was doing the honors. He'd fair have to butt his way into the press, thought David.

Suddenly it flew apart as those in the center pushed mightily backward. A lane opened up between David and the barrel, and the light of the fire revealed two men facing each other belligerently. One of them was Mike Fink. His usually cheery face was drawn into a mask of hate, he was prancing around on his toes, and his head was drawn down between his shoulders. Suddenly he straightened and leaped into the air and before he lit his heels came together three times.

"Whoop! I'm a Mon River roarer! I'm a ring-tailed screamer! I loves the wimming an' I'm chockful of fight! I can outrun, outjump, outshoot, throw down, drag out, an' lick ary man on the river from here to Lo-ville. Who-o-p!"

Mike leaped into the air again and came down crouching. Suddenly he shot forward, his head down. The second man turned and ran into an alley as if the devil were after him. Mike pulled up.

"Who-o-o-p!" he shouted, and leaped over the bonfire. He flapped his arms as if they were wings and crowed "Cock-a-doodle-doo!" his round face wreathed in smiles. His good humor was contagious and the crowd, which had been uncertain whether to take the quarrel seriously, whooped with laughter.

David reached the barrel. He accepted a gourd from Bull Canady and drank thirstily. Good thing that Galoot ran while the running was good. Mike might not have been so good-natured if the fellow had stood his ground. Mike was a mean-tempered chap to deal with, once he got riled up.

David absently shook the gourd with a circular motion. He wouldn't want to have to come up against Mike himself—not but what he could lick him if he had to. Mike



thought he was some punkins at bragging, too, but if that was the best he could do he'd better go home and set by the fire. David himself had had lots of time down river to think them up and he could beat that without half opening his mouth. Anyway if they ever did fight he'd watch out for that head. Mike was worse at butting than any nigger he'd ever seen, and a feller'd have to be purty spry to get out of his road.

Someone piled more wood on the fire. A boatman who had clung to his rifle all day fired a charge of powder into the air and that seemed to put the idea into other heads. The whiskey was making them louder and more quarrelsome, but their anger was directed not at each other but at that nebulous institution down country called the gover'mint. David drained his cup for the third time. He wasn't so damn moody now. In fact he felt purty good.

"Liberty an' no axcise!" he shouted suddenly, and other voices echoed the slogan wildly. The popping of rifles intensified. He hoped them Goddam lily-livered gentry at Ormsby's heard it and trembled in their silver-buckled shoes. Funny, he'd never realized before how he hated them. He'd like to lead the mob down there and clean out the hull bleeding passel of them. He'd burn them out and shoot them as they ran. That'd be great sport. He could see them running out of the blazing tavern almost as plain as if it was really happening. There was General Neville, the old turn-coat bastard, and his son, the high and mighty Colonel Presley. And Captain Thorne! By God, he wouldn't waste a bullet on that bastard. He'd just slit his weazand like he would a wounded doe's.

Suddenly the fire and the liquor seemed to die out of him. He sat down heavily on the empty keg. No, he couldn't do all that. Starr belonged with them and he couldn't hurt her. God damn it! What was the mattter

with him? Every time he got to feeling good he'd think of her—or of them damn Methodists—and there would be a load in his belly as if he had swallowed a bullet mold. Maybe he'd been thinking too much today—they did say that did things to you. Maybe what he needed was more to drink and a chance to get his legs around a wench. He rose a little uncertainly to his feet. He'd find Mike and they'd stop at a tavern and then go out to Mother Pearson's shebang.

Chapter 6

WHEN THEY EMERGED FROM THE TAVERN ON FRONT Street Mike was mellow from the effects of the whiskey but David, though he had drunk measure for measure with Mike, was only miserable inside. Might as well have drunk water for all the good it done, he mused. All the hankering for pleasure was gone out of him. He wondered again if this was to be the way all his life whenever he was confronted with the fulfillment of a dream. This was the moment to which he had been looking forward for ten months as one of supreme vindication. Now that it had come he wished that he had gone home to the Rocks with Big Matt and the folks. Somehow it wasn't the sloe-eyed gal that haunted him now, but the pale-haired Starr that was married irrevocably to another man.

"I feel like singing," announced Mike suddenly. "Start something."

David was half in a mind to tell him to go to hell, but thought better of it.

"How about *One Fine Day*?" he said.

"All right. Tune 'er up."

They turned out Smithfield Street, which was scarcely more than a cow track, and David struck up in a tuneful baritone.

One fine day, one fine day
A-walkin' on the quay, a-walkin' on the quay,
I met a lovely lassy-o
And oh, she looked so classy-o
And with it all so sassy-o
One fine day.

"Too damn high, Dave," complained Mike, who had no gift for song and had rumbled in to the finish a bar after his friend. David obligingly pitched the next stanza a little lower.

A deil was in her eye, a deil was in her eye,
And I had one in mine, and I had one in mine,
I asked her if she'd beddy-o
She said that she was ready-o
If first we'd only weddy-o
A deil was in her eye.

There were other stanzas, lewder ones, and before they were finished the boys reached the Braddock Field Road and saw the glimmer of Hogg's Pond in the darkness. They turned and began to ascend the hill on which a generation before Major Grant had been defeated by the French and Indians. David suddenly felt closer to Mike. Maybe he knew something about the matters that had suddenly assailed him.

"Mike," he said, "did you ever want something real bad?"

"Sure, I always wanted a rifle gun with a silver mounted curley maple stock."

"I mean and not know what."

Mike turned and eyed David with some contempt. "Naw! I allus know what I want."

"Wal, but suppose you was going along with everything so simple—nothing but to be able to hold your own with women, and whiskey, and gouging. Then all of a sudden it ain't like that any more. Thar's lots of other things. Religion, maybe, for one thing, and decent women for another."

"Christ sake," said Mike, stopping in his tracks, "you goin' Methody on me?"

"No, it ain't that, Mike. It's jist when you see some things you wonder if maybe you ain't been on the wrong track."

"Wal, I ain't wondered none. I know whar I'm a-goin'. Life's jist a big game o' dice, an' I'm keep'n mine loaded, see? Ain't nobody gonna catch me a-twixt the river and the shore."

"But it ain't so easy as that, Mike. Suppose for instance, some woman married you—a good woman."

"Ain't no woman gonna hog-tie me. I'm too clever for 'em."

"Maybe you might want to get married."

"Naw. It's a woman's business to try to make us, but it's up to us to be too clever for 'em."

The lighted windows of Marie's tavern appeared on the slope above them at their left and they began the descent into the valley of Suke's Run. Far below them the dark mass of the stables once used for Wayne's army horses bulked against the faint glimmer of the Monongahela. Then they were at Mother Pearson's.

The building before which they stood was a double log house with an open passageway running between. Mike pushed open a door at the right of the passage and strode boldly in while David stood blinking in the light of the fireplace. The room was used both as kitchen and living quarters and its furnishings though scant were no scantier than those of the average pioneer home. Mother Pearson, who had been massaging her gums with a frayed peach twig dipped in snuff, turned to the boys.

"Whar's yore manners, Mike Fink? Ain't nobody never taughted yo' to knock afore you enter a lady's house?"

"I got a dollar hyar that says you ain't no lady," answered Mike flippantly. The old woman giggled appreciatively. "You know damn well me an' Dave wouldn't be hyar if you was all ladies."

"Oh, it's Dave Braddee, is it? Come over hyar, Dave, and let's have a look at ye." David advanced unwillingly to the fireside. The old woman's shrewd eyes appraised him. "Wal, now, Dave," she said, "I swear ef ye hain't become a man. I vum the gals in Orleans was glad to see ye. Set yourselves, boys, the gals'll be in soon."

Everything was just as he last remembered it, thought David. Not a stool or a piggin seemed to have been moved. In the Dutch corner cupboard he saw the brass-bound noggin from which he had taken a swig of whiskey before they went into the other room. His face flushed at the memory of what had happened there, or rather what had not happened, and when a knot blazed in the fireplace he turned aside lest the flare should betray him.

There was no warning thump of brogans in the passage before the door was flung open and the girls came in. David's heart and the world seemed to stand still. As the sloe-eyed gal walked in front of the fireplace he saw that her feet were bare in spite of the early season—a fact he had missed when he had seen her on the Diamond. Business must not have been so good since the soldiers had gone down river. Then she saw him sitting in the shadows.

"How are you, David?" she said, giving him her hand, as if she had not seen him already. She always spoke like that, so slow and precise. She was from Philadelphia and they did say she had been to school. Her father had been an Italian cobbler and her mother a Frenchwoman; both of them had been quality in their own countries, she had once said. Her father had named her for his native village. David silently repeated her name. Arcola de Cavalini. How beautiful and remote it was, he thought for the thousandth time, like the sunset on a mountain, or like distant, mournful music. It was a prime mystery why she was still with Mother Pearson in place of having got married.

Mike was rattling off the boastful story of one of his exploits in the Indian territory. If only he had sense enough to keep still. But the sloe-eyed gal seemed interested only in David. Yes, it was true he'd been to Orleans. Yes, the gals there was good-looking enough. Yes, hot, too—hot as the pepper they doused their food with. No, the Injuns hadn't been much trouble, just a couple fusses at the Watch Tower and another at the Wabash. He'd gotten barked a little. He guided the sloe-eyed gal's brown fingers to the spot. No, it didn't hurt none. Just itched a little now and then.

Mike finished his story and suggested that a little nose paint would be in order. Mother Pearson's carpet slippers slapped the puncheon boards as she moved to the Dutch cupboard. There were five series of gurgles. David counted them. They lifted their mugs and Mike raucously proposed a toast very complimentary to Mother Pearson and her establishment. The old woman snickered as she drank and almost strangled on her liquor. There was no doubt of it; Mike had a way with him. The devil take it, thought David, why wasn't he like that, always cock-a-hoop, instead of long-faced and silent?

The sloe-eyed gal stood before him with a lighted candle. She was wearing a short-sleeved, open-necked brown bodice that was sewed in some way to her heavy green skirt. Her body under the dress seemed fuller than he remembered it from last summer. David rose and started for the door.

"Ain't you forgettin' somethin', Davey?" said the old woman pointedly.

David flushed and fumbled in his pocket. He laid a Spanish dollar on the table. Mike laughed insultingly.

"Mother Pearson gets her money," he grinned, "whether you get anything or not, Arcola."

Damn him, anyhow. Who did he think he was? David

half turned to make something of it, then changed his mind. Brawling in sporting houses was no way to act. He'd just bear Mike's crack in mind.

He stepped into the passage and Arcola followed him, shielding the flame of her candle. He opened the door of the bedroom and she went before him. She set the candle down on a table and drew a heavy curtain across the room. David sighed with relief. It had been the sight of that other bed, empty as it was that had unmanned him. Both beds were dirty and unmade and a strong aroma of slops permeated the room.

On the wall at the foot of the bed hung a silver crucifix that Arcola's mother had brought from France and below it was a *prie-dieu* with candle, prayer book, and red velvet cushion.

He sat down on the edge of the bed while Arcola went to the little window on their side of the room and closed the shutter and barred it. Then she sat down beside him. The light of the candle fell full on her face shrouded in its half length black hair and showed something in her eyes that he'd never seen before in any woman's eyes at such times.

"I've never forgotten you, David," she said.

Just like a gal, spoiling everything. She might as well been his sister. A surge of rage swept over him.

"Then how come everybody knew—?"

The girl looked him straight in the eyes. He noticed by the brown stain on her lips that she'd taken to dipping snuff with Mother Pearson. Well, maybe she didn't have much to comfort her. For some fool reason, perhaps the contrast, he thought of Starr Thorne. Arcola was speaking:

"I didn't know who it was until long after you'd gone down river—"

"Tell me who it was, gal," he broke in harshly.

"It—it was Mike Fink."

"Mike?"

He felt like as if an Injun's bullet had hit him, all weak and empty inside. His best friend that he'd been scuffling and drinking with all day. Mike had done this to him.

"How'd he know?"

"He was watching in the window."

"Why, the low-down, onery bastard. He'll be out thar again, too."

The girl nodded. Mike's raucous laugh resounded from the other cabin. He felt like going over and having it out while he was good and angry. No, he decided, that wouldn't do. Better wait until there were other men as witnesses—and more room to fight in and better light. His eyes fell on the slop jar.

"What's up above?" he said.

"Just the loft."

"Is there a window jist over this one?"

"Yes, why?"

"You wait here. I'm goin' to give Mr. Fink something he'll never forget."

David strode to the window and swung the shutter open, then he picked up the slop jar and climbed the ladder to the loft, where he stationed himself at the window.

The moon was rising and the house cast a deep shadow below him, but the river and Coal Hill beyond were softly luminous. A flatboat drifted by the mouth of Suke's Run. Someone was holding a torch while dark figures strained at the sweeps. David didn't envy the flatboatmen their task of landing at half flood on a be-snagged bank that would still be in shadow.

He looked down thoughtfully and loosed a stream of tobacco juice. Not more than eleven-twelve feet to the ground, he decided. He almost felt sorry for Mike. The

other cabin was suspiciously silent now. Yes, there was the creak of a loose puncheon in the passage. A furtive shadow edged along the logs below and stopped before the window. David lifted the bucket silently and poised it for a moment over the window sill, then carefully up-ended it.

There was a sudden bellow from the astounded Mike as he sprang free of the house and cavorted about the yard like a crazy man. As he emerged into the moonlight he was peeling off his dripping hunting shirt and swearing like a Spaniard.

"Why, Mr. Fink," said David conversationally, resting his elbows on the window sill, "such language would make a keeler blush."

Mike's answer was a classic blend of backwoods and military understatement, which he suddenly ended by departing in haste for the river. David grinned. By Jupe, he didn't know when he had been so well pleased with himself. He felt as light and free as if he had a skinful of nose paint. Life was amazing simple, after all. He descended the ladder and bolted the door and closed and bolted the shutters of both windows.

The sloe-eyed gal was standing by the bed in the light of the candle. As he turned she lifted her arms above her head and wriggled her torso and hips. The brown and green dress slid down her curving, tawny body and fell in a heap about her feet. With a sweep of his hand David thrust back the curtain so that the whole room was open to his gaze. By God, he was a man now. The girl raised her arms again and clasped her hands behind her head while her full breasts pointed at him inquiringly. Her narrow black eyes were soft and eager as a doe's in rutting season.

David grinned, shifted his quid, and pursed his lips. The candle flame sputtered wetly and went out.

Chapter 7

DAVID STOOD IRRESOLUTELY OUTSIDE MOTHER PEARSON'S cabin and looked up at the night sky. The moon was riding higher now and every object in the woodyard was plainly revealed. There was a pile of firewood and an axe sticking in the chopping block, a hogshead with a wooden cover stood at the corner of the house, probably a storage place for the water that the women carried from Suke's Run two bucketsful at a time. A goose in the poultry house set up a lonesome honk and overhead a flock of wild geese on a belated migration answered.

They knew where they were going. He wished he knew as much. That morning as he had piloted the "Elzie" into port life had seemed so simple—merely an assertion of manhood, and as he had said to Mike, the ability to hold your own with women, and whiskey, and gouging.

It wasn't like that any more. All of a sudden his world had fallen about his head in ruins. On account of the pale-haired girl and that Methody preacher. For a moment as he gazed at the tawny body of Arcola de Cavalini he had thought that reality had come back to him, but now it was gone again.

He raised his fist and struck a smashing blow against a log of Mother Pearson's house. There was too many complications to life. Religion for one thing and decent women for another. Maybe there was other things he hadn't found out yet. The wild geese honked overhead again, circling for a landing. Maybe fixing to set down on the pond a-tween old Fort Pitt and the Allegheny. He wished he

could take wing with them in the morning. He felt a nostalgia for something indefinable, he didn't know just what. All he knew was that he was sick of life, of the whiskey, the fighting, the coarse banter, the greasy women. Surely there was something better.

He raised his fist and looked at it in the moonlight. If he held it close enough he could see darker splotches of blood against its darkness. He turned and started toward town, walking rapidly as if he were going someplace in a hurry, though he knew that when he got there he would only hunt a keelboat cargo-box to sleep in.

The walk in the brisk night air with the moon and the clear, untroubled stars overhead did him good. Maybe a man never would find out. Maybe he would always have to wonder. Well, even that, thought David with the inspiration of the stars upon him, was better than never to wonder at all. The notion set his blood to tingling in his veins and he felt a mite superior to the rest of the world. Maybe with thoughts like these he'd turn out to be somebody yet.

David reached the Diamond. It was empty now. The fire had fallen to embers and his streamer flapped dismally on the pole. Tomorrow the sheriff or somebody would come along and cut the pole down. Townsman thought it was a disgrace to have a liberty pole erected within their precincts, but they never did nothing about it until the shouting was all over. Then they sneaked up and cut it down. David kicked viciously at a sleeping porker. He didn't like townsman. He didn't even like their hogs.

The hog squealed and ran a few paces, then laid down again. David started out Market Street toward the Monongahela. Even on semi-holidays like this, townsman retired early, though not as early as farm folks, so he was surprised to see a light in the window of a house just his

side of Watson's tavern. Moved by curiosity he stopped and peered in. The room into which he looked was dark but beyond it in an inner room sat a man scratching a quill across a sheet of foolscap spread on the table before him. Presently he turned his head and sipped from a small glass that had stood at his elbow. It was Lawyer Brackenridge.

His shoulders sagged as if under a great weight, and he wrote slowly and laboriously. But there was more than weariness of body in his position. There was something almost indecent in the way in which the man's attitude and actions betrayed him. He might have decided that he had nothing more to live for and was writing his last will and testament before he blew out his brains.

David yielded to a sudden impulse and knocked on the door. There was a moment's startled silence, then a gruff "Come in." David pushed open the door, entered, and walked across to the inner office. The lawyer had shed his air of world weariness and was looking at him with an unfriendly light in his deep-set black eyes.

"Well, sir," he said, "what can I do for you?"

David was ill at ease. Perhaps the lawyer was not a fellow soul after all. And yet there was something vaguely reassuring in the sight of the walls covered with bookshelves and broadsides, and in the musty smell of the old leather bindings. The table was littered with books, sheets of paper covered with the lawyer's nervous scribbling, and dog-eared copies of the *Pittsburgh Gazette* and the *National Gazette*. David shifted from one foot to the other.

"Wall, Mr. Brackenridge," he said, "I was in court today and heerd yore defense of Sam Brady, so when I seen yore light I thought I'd jist kind of—drop in—an' tell you I thought—it was fine."

"Ah," said Brackenridge, "so you liked my defense. Tell

me, what part appealed to you the most, the statement, the specification, or the argument?"

David was not fool enough to fail to see that the lawyer was making sport of him, but he stubbornly stuck to his guns.

"Why, sir, I liked best the place where you described the woodsman."

The lawyer's bushy brows shot up.

"Oh, you did. Well, it's plain to be seen you're no woodsman or you'd have died before you spoke of it."

David flushed. He'd make one more attempt and if the lawyer didn't meet him halfway then he could go to hell.

"Well, as a matter of fact, I came here for advice, but if you're not so minded—"

"Ah," broke in the lawyer, "so that's where the wind lies. Of course, I'm at your service. Have a chair, Mr. —, Mr. —?"

"Braddee, sir, David Braddee." David sat down on the only other chair the room afforded.

"Mr. Brady. Not a relative of Samuel Brady, perchance?"

"No, sir. Sam Brady's Irish. We're English. I'm Matt Braddee's son. That is—leastways I've lived with him since I was a little tyke."

"I see. I've met your father. A very respectable man. Employed as a boatman, I believe."

"We have our own keelboat, the 'Elzie.'"

"Of course, of course. Now I recollect that I saw you pilot the 'Elzie' in this morning. A very seamanlike job, if I may say so."

"Thank you, sir. I may as well tell you that I am not come on a strict matter of law. It concerns—"

"Ahem!" the lawyer broke in. "When my services are required in matters outside the law and for which I may

not be able to hold the client legally liable I usually require the fee in full in advance."

"How much is it?" said David, flushing.

"Well, a half joe—yes, a half joe will do."

David pulled out his remaining half joe and smacked it angrily on the table.

"Now will you stop all this palaver, Mr. Brackenridge, and listen to what I have to say or shall I bid you good-night and the devil fly away with you?"

The lawyer's brows shot up again and he eyed David with the first gleam of serious interest he had shown. He looked at the half joe gleaming yellow in the candlelight, then back at David.

"*Absit invidia*, Mr. Braddee, no offense intended. Proceed. There shall be no more unseemly interruptions. As the ancient said, *pecunia loquitur*—money talks. But pardon my Latin."

"Wal, I come to you in the fust place because if I told my kinfolk they'd think I was loony, but you being a gentleman of book larning might understand." Brackenridge bowed slightly, but there was no mockery in his eyes. He was beginning to be intrigued.

"When I piloted the 'Elzie' in this morning I thought I had the world by the tail. Thar warn't nothing I warn't ready to meet and spit in its eye. And then something happened."

"It usually does at that point," interpolated the lawyer. "Proceed. What happened?"

"That's jist what I don't know."

"But there must have been something. When did you notice the change?"

"Wal, it was when I fust seen a—a gal."

"Oh, a girl. What did she say?"

"Nawthing—leastways not to me. It was jist the way she looked."

"How was that?"

"I can't rightly say. Like a doe that's been shot, I guess. It sort of tugged at me down inside, like."

"Is she in trouble?"

"I dunno—that is, I think she is."

"Who is it?"

"I—I'd ruther not say, sir."

"Hm-m." The lawyer looked at the lad speculatively. "Any other symptoms?" he said. He was getting to be quite the father confessor, he thought wryly. But the boy interested him. A remarkable blend of shrewdness and naïveté.

"Yes, sir. This'll sound mighty peculiar, sir. I was a-sitting on the bank watching the Methodists start down river and harking to their prayers and songs. I thought sure my heart was going to pop out of my throat. And I've had a heavy feeling in my belly ever since."

"Hm-m. Probably indigestion."

"No, sir. I ain't ever had a bellyache before."

"Well, there's always a first time." The lawyer looked at David shrewdly but kindly. He had served a hitch in the ministry in his youth and knew a great deal about the impact of religion upon the mind.

"All in all, I've been right smart upset by it, sir. I don't want to eat or drink and I'm all in a maze. I keep thinking, too. I've always done that, but this is a different kind of thinking. It's about maybe I ought to know whar I'm a-goin' 'stid a-drifting like a keelboat without setting pole or steering oar. I keep a-wanting something, but I'll be shot if I know what it is. Life ain't as simple as it used to be. Maybe thar's things I ought to know if I'm ever going to amount to a hill of beans."

"Is that all that's on your mind, David?"

"Ain't it enough?"

"Yes," answered Brackenridge. "Would that every mortal had the same longings that you have."

"You know what it is, Mr. Brackenridge?"

The lawyer reached for his glass and took a sip of whiskey. He studied the face of the lad sitting before him, noting his high intelligent forehead and sensitive, finely bred features. He's no Braddee, he thought, remembering Old Tom's crazy maunderings and Big Matt's honest, but heavy, countenance. By Gad, there wasn't another head like that in Pittsburgh. And on top of that physique. What might not this boy do if he were once given an opportunity!

"David," he said, "all of your symptoms can be grouped together as manifestations of what the Greeks called anamnesis—man's yearning to recapture the eternal values he once knew. You don't understand it? Never mind. Some day you will. Some men experience it from earliest childhood, others begin it as young men, while others—and they the vast majority of mankind, God pity them—never know the divine afflatus.

"I can remember, in my own case, whilst I was still in petticoats, of standing by my father's knee and drinking in the wisdom of Ecclesiastes. A few years later I went to Latin school and there became acquainted with a man named Horace, nigh two thousand years dead, who spoke to me of honor, justice, and moderation. I can remember yet the bitter tears I shed when the cow I was tending chewed up with her cud the little copy of Horace that I had been reading. And then there came other great men, Aristotle, and Epicurus, and Plato—above all, Plato.

"No, David, your disease is not a new one. It is the oldest known to man. But as your lawyer—or rather it seems that I'm a medico—I must warn you that there is no cure."

He stopped, and David, who had been following him only with difficulty, waited hopefully.

"Can you read and write, David?"

"A little."

"What books have you read?"

"I never read a book in my life," answered David simply. Brackenridge waved a hand airily.

"It's no matter. You might have read the wrong ones. But you've no time to lose now." He took another sip of whiskey.

"David," he said, "you have seen right smart of this world, haven't you?"

"I've been to Orleans," answered the boy with a touch of pride.

"Quite so. That is about two thousand miles. The earth, they say, is about twenty-five thousand miles in circumference. Can you imagine that, David?"

"It's tre-God-awful-mendous, sir," said David seriously.

The lawyer's severe countenance relaxed a little as he went on. "Quite. Well, strange as it may seem, there is a world that is tre-God-awful-mendouser. It reaches from the farthest star that you can see above us to the farthest star that men can see on the other side of the world below you. It contains all that mankind has hoped, and dreamed, and struggled for; all his noble longings and aspirations; his nights of study and days of toil; the flaming hot passions of youth, and the icy cold calculations of age; great scholars and statesmen and warriors live there and they accept the humblest of us as an equal; time and space mean nothing to us for we can traverse a thousand years and a thousand miles in a twinkling; we can grow old and rheumatic in this life but in that we drink daily of the fountain of youth; poverty and disgrace may assail us here, but there we live as rich as Croesus and as honored as gods; ambition's ful-

fillment may shun us here, but we find there a solace such as the mortals around us dream not of. This, my boy, is the world that awaits the true seeker after knowledge, the delectable country of the mind."

The lawyer paused and rolled the phrase under his tongue. The delectable country of the mind! Where had he heard it, or something like it? Anyhow it was a good expression. He wished he could be sure he had thought of it himself.

The delectable country of the mind, thought David. Where had he heard that before? Oh, yes. The big Methody preacher, Daniel Strong. Only it had been of the soul, hadn't it? No matter, maybe they meant somewhat the same thing.

"But, David, I must warn you first that no matter how deeply you make your way into this delectable country you will never be satisfied. You will be like the horseleech's daughters, forever crying 'Give, give.' You will find the laws of Nature reversed. Your satisfaction will be that you are never satisfied. You will glory that you seek and never find. And the more you learn the more you will crave, until the desire gnaws at your brain like a nest of maggots. It will gnaw at you day and night; you will go threadbare to buy books; your children will cry from hunger and your wife will beg you with tears in her eyes to have mercy on their need. You will steal time from your business to devote to the classics or to write squibs for the printer; you will awake in the night with a new quatrain in your head; you will lose your friends because you insult them unwittingly; you will ruin your eyes with the midnight oil; but you will never know what makes the universe tick. And yet you would not exchange your portion, poor though it be, for all the gold of the King of Spain. When at last you leave the world and rise into the divine afflatus, who knows, per-

haps even there you will glory in that you seek and never find."

The lawyer stopped, but David sat with rapt face still contemplating the vision set before him. He had never been so moved in his life. Here were many things which he had never known, and yet somehow they seemed familiar, as if he had seen them in a dream.

"I see, my boy," said Brackenridge, "that you already know the divine afflatus."

David came back to earth. "No, sir," he said, "I never heard of it until you brought it up."

Brackenridge smiled. By Gad, the boy was a jewel. Now for the cutting and polishing.

"As your lawyer," he said briskly, "and in consideration of the fee you have tendered me I am going to advise that you enroll immediately in the Pittsburgh Academy. The term opens on Monday, two days after tomorrow, so you are in good time. If you are diligent and attentive it will not be long before these problems you bring to me will begin to straighten themselves out."

He rose and took the half joe from the table. For a moment he balanced it hesitatingly in his hand, then with a sudden movement thrust it into his pocket. David stood up and the lawyer took his hand and pressed it as he led him to the door.

"Good-night, my boy," he said. "Remember, and this is what you paid your good half joe to hear, seek the delectable country of the mind."

Chapter 8

DAVID SLEPT ROLLED UP IN A BORROWED BLANKET ON THE cargo box of Bull Canady's keelboat and did not awaken until the odor of roast goose and baking corn bread drifted from the beach to his nostrils. He had no elaborate toilet to perform; he simply rolled out of his blanket and plunged his head in a big wooden bucket of river water that stood near the bow, wiped the water from his hair, and sat down on a thwart while he waited for the sun and wind to complete the drying.

Bull's crew still lay about the deck wrapped in their coarse gray blankets, sleeping off the effects of the night's debauch. Today they would drop down to the army storehouses at old Fort Pitt and take on a cargo of powder, clothing, and officers' stores, and by the middle of the afternoon would be headed for Fort Washington. But meanwhile, except for the luckless cook for the day, they slept stentoriously, heedless of the rising sun shining in their eyes.

Maybe Big Matt would get an army cargo next, thought David. That wouldn't be so bad, though he'd rather go to Louisville. The sooner they left, the better. He didn't care as much for Pittsburgh this time as he'd thought he would. There was too much happening that he couldn't understand. And come to think of it he still had that gnawing in his belly from yesterday—or was it hunger? He looked at the roasting goose and decided that he was just hungry.

Still he hadn't been hungry yesterday. What was it Lawyer Brackenridge had told him it was? He wondered if he

hadn't sort of half promised to go to Pittsburgh Academy. Anyway he didn't want to go now. He just wanted to drop down river with the flood and forget about yesterday, forget about Lawyer Brackenridge, yes, and Starr with her high-toned husband, and the sloe-eyed gal, too. He was through with gals, by Jupe. He'd nearly got him a fight because of Starr and he made no doubt that Mike Fink would be on the war path this very minute. Well, he could take care of Mike if he had to but he'd rather not try it on a sure enough empty belly. He wished Jim Girty would hurry up that goose. It looked powerful good from where he was sitting.

Young Jim Girty gave the goose an elaborate amount of attention, for in spite of his ambition to appear tough in the eyes of the men, he really enjoyed cooking. He turned the spit frequently and jabbed the point of his hunting knife into its breast to test its condition. Presently he lifted the spit and pushed the bird from it into a shallow wooden box and carved it expertly, using the spit to steady it. Then he explored the coals of the fire with the spit and uncovered a huge corn dodger, which he placed in the box beside the goose. He struck the battered coffee pot with the spit.

"Turn out, you galoots," he shouted. "Grub's ready."

Bull grunted and stirred, then sat up yawning. Girty hoisted the food-laden box over the edge of the cargo box and gave it a push, then went back for the coffee pot. Bull threw aside his blanket and stood up. He kicked the man next to him.

"Turn out," he said. "Pleasuring's over. We got work to do."

He walked the length of the cargo-box, bestowing a hearty kick upon each sleeping member of his crew. The men swore and sat up. Girty returned with the coffee pot and a cluster of tin cups and the men gathered about the

trencher, grumbling and yawning. Each man helped himself to a portion of goose and a hunk of ash-covered dodger. The beverage was made from a cheap blend of coffee and parched wheat, and though it tasted of river mud and left a sticky mess in the bottom of the tin cup, yet it was piping hot and was gratefully slushed down their parched gullets by the boatmen. Within five minutes the goose had literally disappeared; the last bones were being licked and tossed into the river one by one.

Suddenly a stone clattered in the empty food box and there was a shout from the bank above them.

"Dave Braddee," cried Mike Fink's familiar brassy voice, "come ashore and fight."

David waved a greasy hand.

"You go ahead and do yore bragging, Mike, while I polish off this drumstick."

Mike fairly danced with rage as he loosed a flood of expletives, but David calmly finished his goose leg and picked up the remains of his dodger. He guessed he could risk a few more bites. He hadn't eaten more than enough to stay his stomach anyhow. Mike had slid down the bank and was now prancing up and down the beach hurling insults and when the boatmen laughed at the contrast between his rage and David's calm, the ridicule added fuel to Mike's passion.

"Ain't you a-goin' to match brags with him, Dave?" asked Jim Girty a little anxiously. Western etiquette demanded such a prelude to a fight and the onlookers enjoyed it almost as much as the bloody aftermath.

"Shore," replied David, "as soon as I finish this dodger. You don't want me to die hungry, do you?"

"Don't talk about death, Dave," said a boatman. "It's onlucky."

David swallowed the corn bread and rose slowly to his feet.

"Unlucky, hell," he said. He stood on the cargo box stretched up to his full height and threw out his chest. His eyes were fixed on the bank above Mike's head where a group of boys and men was gathering.

"Air ye pree-pared to die, Mike Fink?" he said.

"Come down here, Dave Braddee, an' I'll show you who'll git kilt. Come on down, you misbegotten spawn of a weazel an' a skunk's daddy. Come on down, you son of a mammy that was raised on chitlin's and fried horses' dung."

David covered a yawn and answered, as if surprised and grieved.

"Why you son of a fee-male renegade that was bitched by an Injun dog that gave you yore long ears, I wouldn't fight a blue-gilled tadpole like you. You jist natchurly ain't in my class. Bring me wild cats, bring me panthers, bring me ba'rs. I'm jist roused from slumber and I crave my morning exercise."

"Whoop! Clar out, you rabbit-livered children of Sodom," bellowed Mike. "I'm a chee-ild of the forest an' I won't be denied. I bin out with Mad Anthony fer a year an' I ain't had nothin' to try my stren'th but Injuns an' catamounts. Whoop! I ain't had a real fight sence General Washington fit the British out of Boston, an' I'm rarin' to go. I'll bite off your nose, I'll gouge out your eyes, I'll crack yore bones like a storm smashin' pine trees, an' I'll skin you alive an' tan yore hide fer a drum head. Who-o-op!"

Mike was better at bragging than he had thought, said David to himself. He'd better put himself into it. He threw his head back and his eyes became dreamy. His words took on the rude cadences of the authentic berserker. His body swayed slightly but he did not move from the stance he had taken on the cargo box.

"I rub my shoulders on the stars and bresh my ha'r with a comet's tail. I pluck down the moon to light my pipe and imprison the sun for a candle beam. When I speak the four winds heed my voice and the elements hearken to my call. The clouds ascend to cool my brow and the rivers lave my dusty feet. When I drink the Massassippi runs dry and I strain the alligators through my teeth. I hollow the lakes with the spread fingers of my hand and fill them to overflowing with one pissing."

David peered out of the corner of his eye. Bull Canady and his crew were standing in open-mouthed admiration, even if he had forgotten to add the customary whoops. He felt as an artist must feel at the unveiling of a great painting. He felt as if he were already a great man on the river. Let Mike beat that if he could. And Mike, undaunted, summoned lungs and memory to his aid.

"Yeow-w-w!" he screamed, and the resemblance to a panther was startling. "Yeow-w-w! I'm the Panther of Pucketty Run. I'm the prowling wumpus of the bad lands. I wear a shirt made of nettles and cockleburs, I slick up a year's rations for the Western Legion at a sitting and when I lose a barbecued ox in my hollow tooth I pick it out with a mast pine. I wipe the sweat off my brow with the skin of a he-bear, an' keep a brace of panthers to scratch my mosquito bites. Yeow-w-w!"

Mike pranced and waited, his round face contorted by hatred. David had already peeled off his belt and hunting shirt and now he snatched a setting pole from the deck and vaulted ashore. This was getting interesting. He hadn't felt so good since he had dumped the bucket of slops over Mike's head. He flapped his arms and inched sideways.

"Kr-r-r-r!" he screamed. "I'm the ab-original Eagle of the Alleghenies. I'm the apostle of death and desolation. When my shadow comes athwart the sun women and chil-

dren hide in the caves of the airth. At my scream the nations quake with fear, and the beasts of the forest scrouge down in their lairs; strong men's bones run like tallow and sailors scuttle their ships to hide in the depths of the sea. It freezes the heart of Beelzebub and festoons the dome of hell with icicles. Kr-r-r-r! When I sleep the wind of my snoring crumbles the cities of the world into dust; the ree-verberation levels the mountains of the airth so that they fall into the sea; the heat of my nostryles melts the polar ice cap and floods the North American continent, and when I open my eyes the flash is like the aurory borealis on a winter night. Kr-r-r-r!"

There was a shout from keelboat and bank of "Hooray for the eagle!" but Mike returned to the attack unabashed. A shout of "Go it, panther!" encouraged him as he pranced and launched forth.

"I'm the darling of desolation, the prede-stined ruler of the universe. Panthers and pole cats is my nat'ral food washed down with barr'ls of lye water. I've killed so many Injuns I put the wig-makers of Yurrop out of business with their sculps an' used the money to pay the national debt of the Yewnited States. I'm the eye-dential power that hollowed out the oceans whar I stubbed my toe an' filled them with the salt tears of orphings whose daddies I kilt fer sport. Why, at the age of ten years they sold off all the stud niggers in Virginny an' left the work to me, an' I had stren'th left to sarvice the harem of the Sultan of Turkey when he was off to the wars."

"You call that anything!" shot back David. "Yore weak, yore puny, yore a tomtit. Why, when I was ten the Amazons sent a depytation to beg me to be their stud and the Sultan's see-raglio left your arms and swum the Atlantic Ocean to spend one night with me. I'm the eye-dential A-rab that in one day so charmed the wimming that King

Solomon died of a broken heart. Why, before I had my first shave they threw away all the plows in the Northwest Territory and I did all the plowing myself—thirty-six square miles in a day—one congressional township.”

There was a shout of laughter from the crowd, and Mike, half-crazed by anger, launched into his culminative brag as he pranced in a narrowing circle around David.

“Whoop! I’m a Salt River roarer! I’m a ring-tailed screamer! I loves the wimming an’ I’m chockful o’ fight! I’m half horse an’ half cock-eyed alligator an’ the rest o’ me is crooked snags an’ red-hot snappin’ turkle. Whoop! I kin hit like fourth-proof lightnin’ an’ every lick I make in the woods lets in a acre o’ sunshine. I kin out-run, out-jump, out-shoot, out-brag, out-drink, out-fight, rough-an’-tumble, no holts barred, ary man on both sides the river from Pittsburgh to Lo’ville. Come on, you wobble-hipped keeler an’ see how tough I am ter chaw.”

“Quit yore bragging and git to work,” answered David. “I’ve jist dined off ba’r claws and panthers’ hearts washed down with a barr’l of rattler’s pizon, and I got the meanness of ’em all. Whoop! I’m ravagerous! I’m savagerous! I’m cantankerous! I’m helli-God-damn-it-to helliferocious! I’ll break yore neck like a tailor breaks a thread, I’ll crack yore bones like sea biskit, I’ll festoon yore guts from tree to tree like a lady hangs a string of pearls around her neck.”

“I’m a-comin’, Dave Braddee! Take keer yoreself.”

“Take keer yoreself, Mike Fink.”

Mike ran in with his hands spread and clenched. There was no science to what followed. Each man strained to lift his opponent and throw him, and after a moment Mike was successful. David’s hold broke and he sprawled in the sand. Mike jumped on him with both feet, but since he was wearing moccasins he did little damage, and David caught one foot and brought him down.

Over and over they rolled in the sand and mud, punching when they could and each striving to guard his own eyes from the gouging thumbs of the other. The spectators were frantic with blood lust and milled about the panting, sweating fighters shrieking, "Go it, panther!" "Go it, Dave!" David was on top now and his teeth closed on Mike's thumb. He bit as hard as he could. There was one thumb that wouldn't do any more gouging for a while.

Suddenly Mike's knee came up in David's crotch. He groaned and staggered to his feet and ran a few steps doubled up with pain. For a moment he even forgot Mike. When he remembered to look the scout was charging, head down. David summoned all his endurance and dropped flat just in time to trip his opponent in his bull-like rush. Mike plunged forward and his face ploughed a furrow a foot long in the rubble of the beach.

A voice cried out above the din and David saw the crowd scatter and run; that is, all except Bull Canady's boatmen. A squad of blue coated men, he couldn't tell how many, floated into his blurred vision, and there was a general fight on. David felt a soldier seize his arm and he weakly attempted resistance. Then something hit him in the solar plexus and he lost consciousness.

Chapter 9

DAVID WAS SHOCKED INTO CONSCIOUSNESS BY A RUSH OF icy water about him. For a moment he thought he was drowning but finally he managed to struggle to his knees in the slippery mud. Someone was floundering beside him and there was the sound of guffaws above him. His face was so plastered with mud, however, that he could see nothing. He fumbled about in the water at his knees and cleaned his face as best he could and looked up.

The soldiers, fifteen or twenty in number, were lined up on the bank enjoying the show hugely. For once they had the laugh on a boatman. Then David saw that it was not so much him they were laughing at as Bull Canady's crew. The boatmen, hopelessly outnumbered, had retreated to their keel and pushed out into the river, where at a safe distance they were reciting in choice terms their opinion of the United States Army. Several bluecoats sitting farther up the bank and nursing bruised arms or sore heads were evidence that there must have been merry play for a while.

David wished he could have seen it. Bull would have called his men on board and they would have fought off the invaders while the cable was slipped and Bull set his mighty shoulders to a setting pole and worked them out. Now that he noticed it, a good half of the soldiers were wet and muddy to the knees or might even have sat down in the water. Maybe the laugh wasn't so one-sided after all. Anyhow Bull would be safe when he got down to old Fort Pitt. There were so many boatmen there that it would take the whole garrison of Fort Fayette to arrest them.

Then David saw that Mike Fink was sitting in the water beside him. His face was a ghastly mass of bloody bruises, half covered with mud, and his eyes were almost swollen shut. All the fight was gone out of him now and there was something pathetic in the helpless droop of his shoulders and the blind groping of his hands. David forgot all about their late enmity.

"Mike," he cried, "yore face is a mess. Let me wash it off for you."

"Don't touch it, Davy," groaned Mike. "Just give me a hand to the shore, will you? I can't see a thing."

David guided him to the beach and would have gone on into the village when an officer stopped them.

"Here, you can't go," he said. "You're under arrest."

David looked at him. It was the same lieutenant he had seen the day before, shooting down the river in a bateau; and come to think of it, he had also been at Ormsby's tavern. His heart sank but he put on a bold front.

"What for?"

"Fink here is absent without leave from the scouts. They'll probably hold you for last night's doings if not for this brawl."

"Who will?"

"Why, the sheriff. Here he is now."

Sheriff Ewalt, followed by a couple of deputies and a soldier, was picking his way across the beach.

"You wanted to see me, Lieutenant Repperger?"

"Yes. I've a man here that you may want. You remember our friend, Dave Braddee?"

"Of course, of course. Thank you, lieutenant. I'll take charge of the prisoner."

"What're you going to do to Mike?" asked David.

"Oh," said the lieutenant, "he'll be sent back to Fort

Harmar on the first boat. They may give him forty lashes and put him in the guardhouse for a bit."

"Come on, Braddee," said the sheriff importantly. "We'll take you to see Justice McReady."

The deputies each took one of his arms.

"Take keer of yoreself, Mike," said David.

"I'll do my damndest," said Mike, moving his cracked and swollen lips with difficulty. "An' you take keer o' yoreself."

David walked down Water Street between the deputies with the sheriff strutting ahead and self-consciously clearing the way. A mob of boys followed them and made insulting remarks to the limbs of the law. Any boatman was sure to have the admiration of Pittsburgh's small fry. Bull Canady's horn echoed from Coal Hill and David saw that he was putting in at Fort Pitt. The Thorne gig was pulled out close to the edge of the bank and Starr's eyes were fixed on him pityingly. Her husband looked at the prisoner with an expressionless countenance and said something to her. The next moment they were gone. David wondered dully if Starr had seen the fight on the beach. This was a fine way to end up after all his fine dreams about what would happen when he got back to Pittsburgh.

Sheriff Ewalt entered a low, one-story building, which served Mr. McReady as warehouse, retail store, counting house, and seat of justice. David thought he'd never seen a place in such confusion. Bags of cotton, huge twists of tobacco, kegs of whiskey and molasses, bolts of cloth, stacks of tin ware and dishes, fire arms, Indian gauds, and furs littered the floor and counters and crammed the shelves to the ceiling. A mob of curious men and boys pressed in after the sheriff and thronged the aisle and stood on convenient counters and bales while a weak-chinned clerk remonstrated with them.

Mr. McReady rushed panting into the store. He had run all of two blocks when he heard that the sheriff was heading for his office with a prisoner. Mr. McReady was a pleasant enough man in the ordinary affairs of life and business, but now the solid citizen was supplanted by a caricature of justice. He elbowed his way through the spectators.

"What is it, sheriff?" he said. "What have we here?"

"It's young David Braddee, sir. Taken while engaged in a gouge-fight with young Mike Fink."

"Where's Fink?"

"Taken by the military, sir. Arrested for desertion. They turned Braddee over to be dealt with by civil authority."

"I see. What have you to say for yourself, young fellow? Sheriff, could I trouble your deputies to clear my store?"

Sheriff Ewalt motioned to his aides. The spectators gave way slowly while Mr. McReady rushed off to the door to see that none of his goods disappeared. When the last invader had been expelled and a deputy stationed at the door, the inquiry was resumed. Mr. McReady cleared his throat and thrust out his chest.

"Ahem! Well, David, do you admit the charge that you were fighting?"

"Yes." David's attitude could scarcely have been called disrespectful. It was one of mere indifference.

"You will address the court with respect as 'your honor,'" said Mr. McReady severely.

"Yes, your honor."

"And, if I mistake not, you were concerned last night in the raising of the so-called liberty pole in the Diamond?"

"Yes, your honor."

"Well, a short horse is soon curried," said Mr. McReady. "I think that the Mosaic law, well laid on, is about right for this case, Mr. Sheriff."



There was an interruption at the door.

"You will announce me to Mr. McReady," said a man's voice, coldly, but with a rising inflection that presaged a storm.

"Mr. Brackenridge wants to see you, your honor," shouted the deputy.

"Tell him to wait," answered the justice testily. "I'm busy now."

The lawyer thrust the deputy aside and strode back into the store.

"Mr. McReady," he said sternly, "as this lad's attorney I demand the right to advise him."

"As his attorney, Mr. Brackenridge? He has said nothing of you."

"Nevertheless he retained me last night, and I am here now in pursuance of that agreement."

"This is all very strange, Mr. Brackenridge. How about it, David?"

David nodded. "Yes, I hired Mr. Brackenridge last night."

"Then you must have been meditating a breach of the peace," said the justice triumphantly.

"Mr. McReady," said Brackenridge, "it is not in your purview to examine motives. That is for a higher court. It is your duty to examine the facts as set forth by witnesses and fine the accused or hold him on recognizance. Where are the witnesses?"

"None are needed here, Mr. Brackenridge," said the justice testily. "The culprit was caught in a breach of the peace and admits complicity in the raising of the liberty pole last night."

"Oho!" crowed Brackenridge. "It's the liberty pole now, is it? A hundred men were engaged in the affair last evening, and this morning our brave lion of the law brings in one lad for prosecution. Where were you, Mr. Sheriff,

when the mob was roving the streets, and where were you, Mr. McReady—and for that matter, where was I? We were skulking in our homes. Yes, all of us were. We were afraid to venture out and uphold law and order. And now we bravely prosecute a lad who has been handed over to our tender mercies, on another charge, by a file of the military. Shame on all of us!”

Mr. McReady struck his desk angrily with an iron paper weight.

“Mr. Brackenridge,” he shouted, “I shall not allow you to question the fairness of this court.”

“Then where are your witnesses against the lad?”

“Mr. Ewalt,” said the justice, “did you see the prisoner marching with the mob yesterday?”

“I did, sir, and it is well known that he nailed the banner to the liberty pole.”

“Witnesses!” shouted the lawyer.

“Mr. Brackenridge,” said the justice, beside himself with rage, “if you continue to interrupt the proceedings of this court I shall have you ejected.”

“Very well, sir, I will be silent for the nonce.”

“David Braddee,” said the justice, “do you have anything to say in defense of your conduct?”

“What’s the use?” said David. “You hate me because I defended myself against Captain Thorne last night at Ormsby’s. A common boatman like me has no right to raise a hand against a gentleman.” The words were bitter enough, but they were spoken in as impersonal a manner as if they concerned a quarrel among the inhabitants of the antipodes.

“What’s this?” cried Brackenridge. “Is there a personal grudge involved?”

Mr. McReady pounded the table with his paper weight. “You will be silent, Mr. Brackenridge!” he shouted. “David

Braddee, I hereby sentence you to receive thirty-nine lashes, well laid on the bare back."

"By God, Mr. McReady," roared Brackenridge, "if you make a move to carry out that sentence, I shall apply to Chief Justice McKean for an injunction to prevent it until the lad has been sentenced in regular order by the court of quarter sessions, and I shall apply for another to prevent you from hearing another case or performing any judicial functions whatsoever until the case of David Braddee is settled by due process of law."

The justice was so taken aback that for a moment he was speechless. It was plainly to be seen that he was frightened by Brackenridge's threat and had no stomach to have his action passed upon by a higher court.

"Very well, Mr. Brackenridge," he said finally, "since you with your unimpeachable legal acumen question my authority to administer the law of Moses I shall sentence the prisoner to a fine of one half joe or a month in the county jail, in addition to which he shall also cut down with an axe the so-called liberty pole lately erected in the Diamond."

"Verily, a Daniel come to judgment," rejoined the lawyer. "We have nailed the scoundrel and now we shall make him undo his dirty work. You are a craven, Mr. McReady. It is we, and not this lad, who should cut down the pole as penance for not having enforced law and order yesterday."

The justice empurpled and was about to shout the lawyer down, when he thought better of it.

"Very well, sir," he said with a gleam of mockery, "if you feel that way you may swing an axe on the other side of it."

"I'll do that, Mr. McReady," he said. "At least it will set an example that the citizens of Pittsburgh badly need." He thrust a thumb and forefinger in his waistcoat pocket. "And

since the lad is not likely to have a half joe by him, I'll pay the fine myself." A gold piece rang on Mr. McReady's table, the same coin that David had given the lawyer a few hours before.

"I'll thank you, Mr. McReady," said Brackenridge, "if you'll write out a receipt for David here and let us get about our woodcutting."

Chapter 10

THE NEWS THAT LAWYER BRACKENRIDGE HAD VOLUNTEERED to aid a prisoner sentenced to cut down the liberty pole traveled over the village of Pittsburgh like wild fire, and by the time that David arrived at the Diamond under guard of Sheriff Ewalt and his deputies, every street and alley was spewing excited men, women, and children. The youngster to whom David had talked the day before on Water Street appeared with his white hunting shirt. David gave him a copper piece and laid the shirt on the ground. Apparently the sheriff was in no hurry but was waiting to see if Brackenridge would keep his promise. David recognized in the crowd many of those who had been in the celebration the night before and in addition a number of the local gentlemen of respectability.

There was a shrill shout from a boy at the mouth of Market Street, and the crowd parted to allow Brackenridge's passage. Save for the axe on his shoulder he might have been a soldier marching to the tap of a drum, so quick and even were his steps, so erect his carriage, and so straight his eyes to the front.

At the foot of the liberty pole he set down his axe and slowly removed his rusty black coat. He folded it with unaccustomed neatness, laid it upon the ground, and placed his cocked hat upon it. Next he loosened his neck cloth and laid it upon the hat.

"All ready, David?" he said. "I'm taller than you so I'll take the higher cut, if ye don't mind."

He studied the pole with practiced eye and looked over the Diamond as if there was no one within a mile.

"Let's fall it toward the north," he said.

He spat upon his hands and balanced the axe. David's axe bit into the pine trunk and the lawyer's followed quickly, just opposite and a little above David's. The clean white chips flew and the notches steadily became deeper. The crowd on the north hummed with concern and parted on each side of the ground where the pole would fall. The notches were a little short of meeting now and there was a premonitory shudder along the pole. David stood aside and the lawyer leaned one hand on the pole and pushed. The fibers cracked loudly as they broke, and the urchins in the crowd shouted with glee and the women and men buzzed excitedly as if they had never seen such a sight. Brackenridge's sardonic smile had never been so brilliant.

"Sic semper tyrannis," he said as the pole thumped on the ground. He stooped for his neck cloth and carefully adjusted it. The cocked hat and the rusty black coat were donned with the solemnity of a rite.

"Well, David," he said finally, "you are free of the toils of the law. Justice has vindicated herself and Pittsburgh can once more hold up her head among her neighbors. Will you come home to dinner with me?"

"Thank you, sir," said David. "I would be honored."

"Not at all, not at all," said the lawyer. "It is I who am honored by the company of one who, like Christ, has borne the sins of the people upon his head."

David hadn't the foggiest notion of what the lawyer was driving at, so held his peace. They started out Market Street toward the river.

"David," said Brackenridge, "you can thank your stars that you got off as well as you did. You hadn't a leg to stand

on. If old McReady had known his law a little better or hadn't been afraid of me, it might have gone hard with you."

"I am beholding to you, sir," said David, "and I owe you that half joe, as well."

"Nonsense, lad," returned the older man. "My conscience smote me for keeping it in the first place, and then when I discovered that you were a fellow poet I knew that I must give it back."

"A poet, sir?"

"Yes, David, a poet—a new singer of psalms. I had always thought it far-fetched to represent people in plays as spouting poetry, but I now own my error. My hat is off in apology to Master William Shakespeare and his fellow wassailers at the Mermaid." The lawyer stopped, gravely removed his hat, and made a courtly leg to the stump of a dead locust tree while the axe on his shoulder bobbed up at a ludicrous angle.

"But I don't understand, sir. I knowed a Shakespeare in Lo'ville, but his name was John—he was a boatman on the St. Looie run. And as for plays, I never seed but one and that was in Orleans. I understood nary a word, it being in French."

"But nevertheless, David, when I saw you this morning standing on the cargo box of Canady's keelboat with your face turned up like a sun worshipper chanting to his divinity, I knew that you were a born poet. Mike Fink sweating away to produce his brag meant nothing to you—did you even see him? Some primitive instinct was rising in you and giving voice as naturally as a bird sings, or as water wells from a spring. That is the gift of poetry, lad, something I would sell my soul to own."

"I see," said David gravely. But he didn't. He never seemed to get more than about half of what the dour

lawyer said, and yet the words fascinated him and gave him a nostalgia for some uncomprehended experience that might have filled the past. It was like waking from an ecstatic dream with the feeling that one has left the life of reality and that the mundane world into which one is emerging is truly only a dream.

They reached the Brackenridge home and walked around to the back so that the lawyer could leave his axe at the woodpile. A comely girl a score of years younger than Brackenridge met them at the door.

"Mrs. Brackenridge," said the lawyer, "may I present my esteemed friend, client, and fellow poet, Mr. David Braddee."

David bowed sedately, and Mrs. Brackenridge curtsied.

"Another poet?" she said with a pretty *moué*. "But you are welcome, Mr. Braddee." She spoke with a faint trace of German accent, and David thought that he had never known a Dutchwoman to be so charming.

"You'd never think, David," said the lawyer glancing slyly from the admiring lad to his wife, "that the first time I saw her she was jumping a fence in pursuit of a cow. Took it like a swallow, she did, David. I sought out her old man immediately and sued for her hand. It then appeared that the next day she was to start shrubbing the east field and he was loath to part with her. So I paid him ten dollars to hire it done, married her at once, and sent her off to Philadelphia the same day to be educated for a poet's wife. Well, d'ye think I got my ten dollars' worth, David?"

"Oh, la, Mr. Brackenridge," said the girl coloring, "show Mr. Braddee into the drawing room while I help Sally with the dinner."

But at David's request the lawyer showed him a wash basin, where he could wash the mud from his hands and face and hair, and helped him beat and scrape the mud

on. If old McReady had known his law a little better or hadn't been afraid of me, it might have gone hard with you."

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David bowed sedately, and Mrs. Brackenridge curtsied.

"Another poet?" she said with a pretty *moué*. "But you are welcome, Mr. Braddee." She spoke with a faint trace of German accent, and David thought that he had never known a Dutchwoman to be so charming.

"You'd never think, David," said the lawyer glancing slyly from the admiring lad to his wife, "that the first time I saw her she was jumping a fence in pursuit of a cow. Took it like a swallow, she did, David. I sought out her old man immediately and sued for her hand. It then appeared that the next day she was to start shrubbing the east field and he was loath to part with her. So I paid him ten dollars to hire it done, married her at once, and sent her off to Philadelphia the same day to be educated for a poet's wife. Well, d'ye think I got my ten dollars' worth, David?"

"Oh, la, Mr. Brackenridge," said the girl coloring, "show Mr. Braddee into the drawing room while I help Sally with the dinner."

But at David's request the lawyer showed him a wash basin, where he could wash the mud from his hands and face and hair, and helped him beat and scrape the mud

from his shirt and trousers. The lawyer then led the way through the kitchen and dining room into the front room. David thought that he had never in his life seen such splendor in a private home. There were gaily figured rugs that struck him with amazement, though since he had been to New Orleans and seen the rug in the foyer of Le Théâtre St. Pierre he had not made the common mistake of supposing that the gentry placed bed coverlets on their floors. The dining room was equipped with a huge cheery sideboard, a polished table, and matched chairs, and the drawing room boasted a complete set of Heppelwhite mahogany, ordered by Mrs. Brackenridge in Philadelphia at scandalous cost. The suite had been transported across Pennsylvania by Conestoga wagon, a process that had taken seven weeks and sent the thrifty lawyer into a towering rage when he had received the wagonmaster's bill.

"This is what Mrs. Brackenridge with her city airs calls the drawing room," explained Brackenridge. "It seems that in Philadelphia the gentlemen sit around the table after dinner and discuss politics and women, while the ladies withdraw into the drawing room and discuss babies and men." He opened a door. "Come on, David," he said, "let's go into the office where we can put our feet on the table and spit if we feel like it."

The two men crossed a hallway and entered the outer office, then the lawyer led the way into his inner sanctum. Brackenridge motioned David to a chair and cleared a space on the table in which he presently placed his feet while he leaned his chair against a bookshelf.

"David," he said, "we spoke last night of the delectable country. Well, this—" he waved his hand to indicate the room, "is my delectable country. We dwell in the midst of a forest that reaches two hundred miles east of us and a thousand miles or more in every other direction, and yet I

have here at my finger tips every experience and every mode of life known to man. If I want military adventure my Gibbon is close at hand and my Caesar; if I would strut the stage with the muses, here is my Shakespeare; if I would profit by the experiences of the great, here is my Plutarch; if I would meditate with a mind at rest, here is my Marcus Aurelius; if I crave the simple joys of a Sabine farm, here is my Horace."

He twisted about and took a small leather-bound volume in Latin, which he handed to David.

"It is the exact counterpart of the Horace that I told you the cow chewed up. Can't read it, eh? That's Latin, David, the noblest language ever spoken by man. You'll soon be better acquainted with it. Study languages, David. A man doubles himself when he learns a new language. My eldest son, Henry, is in St. Genevieve now, living with a French family to gain a knowledge of the language."

The lawyer took a volume of Shakespeare from the table, where it lay open at *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*.

"Have you ever read *Hamlet*, David? No? Well I envy you the new experience. I don't know, though. Somehow it seems fresher every time I read it. You must borrow these books, David. You must read devotedly, omnivorously, passionately. You have many years of neglect to make up."

He pulled other books down as his interest mounted and David's white hunting shirt was stained with the brown smudge of leather bindings as the pile of books on his lap mounted toward his chin. The lawyer was talking half to himself now, and David hung on his words, uncomprehending but fascinated. Then Mrs. Brackenridge appeared in the doorway holding the chubby hand of a seventeen-month-old boy.

"Da-da dinner," said the infant brightly in his piping voice.

The lawyer paused in the midst of an apostrophe to Plato and slowly lowered his hand.

"Dinner?" he said frowning. "Dinner? Oh, yes, of course." He rose to his feet.

But the infant had taken fright and began to wail. His mother lifted him to her shoulder and tried to comfort him.

"There, there, Alec," she soothed. "Daddy didn't go to frighten you." Then to her husband, "Hugh, how often must I tell you not to frown in front of the children? It frightens them."

Brackenridge looked a little shame-faced. "I guess my face was built to frighten children, Sabina. Here." He took a tiny piece of candy from a drawer and popped it into Alec's open mouth. The boy stopped squalling abruptly and sucked solemnly on the candy while the big fat tears continued to run down his face.

"Well, that case is settled out of court," said the lawyer with such obvious relief that his pretty wife laughed.

"Come along, Mr. Braddee," she said. "Dinner is on the table."

David had never eaten a meal in such discomfort. At first he was sure that the fragile chair on which he sat would crash under him and then the feel of the carpet under his brogans made him uneasy. Next he discovered that all the shining implements laid out by his plate had a use and he watched Mrs. Brackenridge as unobtrusively as he could to see how she handled them. He finished a drumstick and looked around for some place to throw it, but the Brackenridges didn't seem to have any way to dispose of their chicken bones. Even the fireplace was covered with a sheet metal contraption. A lean, hairy muzzle appeared around the kitchen door. "The dog," thought David with relief, and whistled as he tossed the bone to the animal.

Mrs. Brackenridge gave an unladylike snort and buried her face in her napkin, while little Alec looked down with interest from his perch in the high chair. David looked uneasily at the lawyer and saw that his face was a study in ironlike composure. It was clear that the gentry did not throw chicken bones to the dogs. He felt the blood mounting to his face. The Brackenridges had been mighty fine to him and he hated to shame them like this. Then he saw the lawyer's lips pucker in a whistle and the dog looked up just in time to catch an accurately aimed chicken bone in its jaws. Black Sally suddenly appeared in the doorway and the dog yelped as her broom descended upon his flanks and he scrambled for the back yard.

"Mrs. Brackenridge," said the lawyer, with the suspicion of a twinkle in his eyes, "David is starting to attend the academy Monday. Now as a woman of the world, educated in the polite purlieu of the eastern metropolis, what would you recommend that he take up?"

The girl had recovered herself by now and answered with a demure twinkle. "La, Mr. Braddee, you're going in for an education, are you? Let me recommend to you a course in needlework—samplers with a good warm verse of scripture worked into them are such comforts on a cold winter evening. Then there's the polite art of making conversation, and how to enter and leave a room, and by all means the minuet and the quadrille—there's nothing like dancing to make a person light on the feet and giddy in the head."

"Yes, m'am," replied David cautiously. He couldn't quite decide whether she was chaffing him or her husband. But Brackenridge's mind was off on another tack and if he knew that his wife was ridiculing him he gave no sign.

"Let us hope they don't make a Presbyterian of you at the academy, David," he said. "Your mind is a beautiful

tabula rasa at present and you must fill it only with the best. My advice to you is to harken only to the ancient worthies and to the secular writers of modern times. But whatever you do, avoid Presbyterianism like the plague. It makes you dour, and opinionated, and contentious—”

“My husband is the horrible example of a born and bred Presbyterian,” put in Mrs. Brackenridge brightly, leaning across to David with charming camaraderie. The lawyer’s earnest tenseness relaxed slightly, but he went on.

“Your Presbyterian is a born Federalist, David. He believes with a kind of fierce joy in the total depravity of mankind more firmly than he believes in the goodness of God. The problems that have afflicted the consciences of men and have divided the body politic for millenia are settled off-hand by this God of the kirk and he speaks so plainly that even the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not mistake him. On Sabbath he speaks through the mouth of the meenister and on weekdays through the mouth of the justice of the peace. And mark you how simple it is to know the just from the unjust. Scripture has promised that the righteous man shall flourish like a tree planted by the rivers of water—ergo, the poverty-stricken are grievous sinners, and are not worthy to sit in the legislature with God’s elect.”

“What he would give us, David,” said Mrs. Brackenridge with a pretty grimace, “is a government of lawyers.”

“God forbid!” exclaimed Brackenridge. “I would, with Plato, have our public affairs entrusted only to those who are suited by education and ability to handle them—and the wealthy are not necessarily in either category.”

“But Lawyer Brackenridge fits into it neatly,” said his wife smiling.

The lawyer’s grim features relaxed in the ghost of a smile. “Why not, my dear? You’ll have small chance to

play the role of social lioness unless your husband attains public office."

"*Touché*," laughed the girl.

"And as for a government by lawyers, why not? I'd liefer have them make my laws than the pack of sniveling, snarling watchdogs of the Lord."

"You must not take him too seriously, David," said Mrs. Brackenridge, with a smile of amused deprecation. "After all, he introduced into the legislature the bill incorporating the Presbyterian congregation. That is one deed that should help to divert the wrath to come."

The lawyer flourished a bit of pudding on his fork. "Sabina," he retorted with a severity that arose from his earnestness rather than from anger, "God was to your family a beneficent Teutonic being who was more interested in hearing himself praised by the celestial choir than in punishing the petty foibles of mankind. He interfered only when it was necessary to readjust the balance of the universe or to see that the malt behaved itself in the brewing vat. You can know nothing of a life spent with the disapproving eye of the Almighty constantly upon you. As a boy and young man he was with me night and day, constantly plaguing me with the question as to whether I was one of the elect or one of the damned; his restraining hand was with me when I milked the cow, or plowed the fields, or sat in school; he chided me when I sang a secular song or told a humorous tale; he wrestled with me when I strolled in the woods for pleasure on the Sabbath, when my mind wandered from the meenister's dry discourse, or when I sneaked a few paragraphs from *Tom Jones*. When I became a man he drove me with knotted cords until I became a Bible-thumper myself, dedicated to visiting his wrath upon the innocent victims who might chance to sit under my ranting. I never in my life knew a moment's peace

until, as John McMillan says of me, I gave up my license to preach and learned to swear."

Little Alec, who had been listening to his father's impassioned words with mounting terror, burst suddenly into loud wails.

"There, Hugh, you've frightened the poor lamb again," said Mrs. Brackenridge, between amusement and vexation. She rose and lifted the chubby infant from his high chair. "Suppose you adjourn to the office again with David, while I try to still the tempest you have raised. You may have given up your license to preach, Mr. Brackenridge, but you've certainly lost none of your old skill at frightening the innocent victims who sit under your ranting."

Chapter 11

DAVID WALKED THOUGHTFULLY DOWN WATER STREET toward Ormsby's ferry. So far as he could recollect he had not said a word about accepting Lawyer Brackenridge's advice that he attend the academy, yet the Brackenridges had taken it for granted that he would start the next Monday. After the events of the morning David felt honor bound to agree, and moreover he wanted, on his own account, to try it. Perhaps the lawyer was right about education furnishing the answer to life's complications.

His thoughts turned toward ways and means. There was almost two hundred dollars coming to him in wages, but he didn't see how Big Matt could afford to let him have it after paying off the other men. He hadn't intended to take it and he wouldn't now, save perhaps for a half joe that added to the six dollars he already had would get him through the first quarter. Brackenridge had said that the price of tuition would be twenty-five dollars a year in addition to books and paper. Goose quills for pens could be picked up on the farm at the Rocks and he could make his own ink from sumac bark. He should be able to rent one of the immigrant cabins on the Monongahela bank for a dollar a month, and he could cut his own wood and bring most of his food from home. Yes, he could make out.

If Big Matt obtained the hoped-for contract to transport army supplies for Major Craig he would have to hire another hand in David's place, but he would be the last man in the world to grumble about it. Big Matt had never been one to hold down his children and had never hesitated to

join battle with his sister, Thomasina Pancake, in their behalf—no mean risk, as those who knew her readily admitted. When they were ready to leave the farm or the boat and get married he gave them what gear he could to start out with and blessed their ventures. David felt a sudden welling of affection for the big, rough boatman. Maybe some day he could be a lawyer like Mr. Brackenridge and have money enough to do something for Big Matt.

"Well, Dave," said a voice, "ye're gittin' to be our most prominent citizen sence ye came back from yore travels."

David looked up and saw the group of old men who loafed on the bench opposite Ormsby's. He grunted a hostile monosyllable.

"Dave did right well by himself last night," leered another old man. "I hear tell the sloe-eyed gal squealed like a stuck pig. Them French bitches must of done a good job educatin' ye."

David glared at the cackling old men. It did beat all how people wouldn't mind their own business—especially old men. He had intended to wait around Ormsby's to see if he couldn't get another sight of Starr, but now he plunged down the cut to the ferry house.

The ferryman was dozing peacefully when David accosted him, but after cocking a shrewd eye at the falling river and another at the prospective passenger he cal'lated in broadest Yankee that he would put him over for one bit. David pointed out that the legal rate was six and one-fourth cents, but the man countered that the river being in flood the job would be wuth more. David answered that you could hardly call that dreening of muddy water a flood and he'd undertake to swim it if he didn't hate to get mud in his ears. The man then agreed to make it nine and three-eighths cents, but David remarked that he'd be damned if he'd pay it, even if it could be cut. He'd go up-

stream to Henderson's ferry and would patronize it Monday morning again when he came back. Why hadn't he said he was coming back Monday, the Yankee rejoined, in a grieved tone. That put an entirely different face on the situation. He'd undertake the accommodation for the aforesaid one bit and would bring him back with his plunder Monday morning without additional charge.

A face-saving compromise having thus been reached, David fished out the quarter of a Spanish silver dollar cut into the shape of a piece of pie. The ferryman produced a hammer and cold chisel with which he proceeded to cut it into two smaller wedges. David watched sharply to see that he cut the silver honestly and then pocketed one of the pieces. He helped the ferryman run a small bateau across a belt of drying mud into the river and took his seat in the stern.

As David had foreseen, the passage proved to be neither arduous nor dangerous. He stepped out of the boat upon the mud flat and after an admonition to the boatman to listen for his hail an hour after daybreak Monday, he set out briskly for McKee's Rocks. Opposite Pittsburgh the lower slopes of Coal Hill were gentle enough to allow of cultivation, and a number of farm houses, one of which served as a tavern and ferry house, were perched above flood stage. Across the river, David noted with satisfaction, Bull Canady's men were loading his keelboat at the old fort. The soldiers had been wise to forget about the morning's scrape.

After he had passed the point where the Monongahela entered the Ohio the road clung precariously to a narrow strip of uneven ground between the towering heights of Coal Hill on the left and the muddy bank of the river. There was barely room for the wagon that occasionally came up from Sawmill Run with coal to be hawked about

the town at a few cents a bushel. David glanced back and saw that Canady's boat was putting out into the stream. Several bluecoats were visible on the cargo box, evidently furloughed soldiers going to Fort Washington, or maybe a guard against the Indians.

The boat, propelled by four lusty oarsmen, overtook David before he reached Sawmill Run. Bull, standing on the upping block with the tiller between his legs, recognized him and raised a shout. The boat edged closer to the bank.

"I heerd ye got off with a fine and a little exercise," shouted Bull. "We aimed to take you and Mike with us, but they war too many sojers. How about comin' along? I'll need another hand on the way back up."

"Can't," David answered. "I'm starting to the academy."

"The what?" bellowed Canady. "I didn't git it."

"The Pittsburgh Academy."

"God-a-mighty," shouted the boatman in amazement. "Have ye teetotaciously reformed? Air they goin' to make a preacher out o' ye?"

"No," said David, "I'm going to be a lawyer to keep rivermen out of jail."

"We might need ye at that," answered Bull, grinning. He gestured at the knot of men on the deck. "We got Mike Fink with us. The blue-bellies are takin' him to Fort Har-mar. Mike," he shouted, "it's Dave Braddee."

Then David saw that Mike was sitting on the deck, his head swathed in bandages. He raised a manacled hand.

"Take keer yo'self, Dave," he croaked.

"Take keer yoreself, Mike," answered David. "Bring me a sculp or two for a souvenir."

"I'll bring you Little Turtle's," said Mike. "I'm goin' after it as soon as I git rid o' these damn fixins."

The boat swept out of earshot. David wondered if Mike were chained to the deck and what would happen if the

boat sank or was attacked by Injuns. It would be just like them gentlemen officers to do that to him. David's gorge rose against the whole race of gentry, except maybe Mr. Brackenridge and Mr. Beaumont. Cripes on a jinny mule! Maybe going to school like this he'd turn into a gentleman himself. He had half a mind to run after Bull's keelboat and say he'd go after all, but presently he thought better of it. He'd like to give the academy a whirl first and see if there was anything to this education business.

An hour later he reached the bank of Chartiers Creek, or as it was usually known, Shirtee's. It was flooded a little by the back wash from the Ohio and he set off upstream to the foot log that lay across it at a narrow place. On his left there lay a bottom patch of ten acres or so, which, taken with the hillside woodlot above would make a right tidy little farm. There was a shelf on the side of the hill that David had often thought was just right for a cabin and barn. Across the creek he could see the rich flats that were cultivated by half a dozen families and the pasture lands on the hillside beyond.

The Braddee's were lucky, he reflected, to own nigh on to three hundred acres of this land, bottom and pasture. He could see Big Matt's log cabin under its chestnut tree close to the river and not far from it the clump of willows that concealed the "Elzie." Almost in a straight line beyond the willows towered the rocks that gave their name to the vicinity and that in turn had been named for James McKee, the trader who had first settled there, and who had sired Alexander McKee, the Tory who had owned this land before the Revolution and had taken his chances with the British and Indians at Detroit. Old Tom often talked about Alexander McKee, and from what the old man said McKee must have been the greatest trader and fighter the western

country had ever seen, always excepting Dick Penburne, of course.

There was a long shrill whistle from the direction of the rising ground. That would be Old Tom coming back from the hunt with his squirrel rifle and his old dog, Barney. A body would think a man past eighty would want to sit in the chimney corner after a spree like yesterday's, but Old Tom wasn't built that way. No chimney corners or lying-a-bed for him. He wanted to live, he said, as long as he could kill his own snakes; after that he hoped some Injun's tomahawk would cave in his roof.

Anyway there wasn't a man in the western survey that got more out of life. There was always something that he was interested in. A few years back he had got the idea that there was a lead mine somewhere in the hills along Shirtee and he had been gone for weeks at a time searching for it. He hadn't found it, but maybe the notion wasn't so crazy. The Injuns must have got their lead from someplace. After that he had an idea for a new-fangled boat that would be propelled by paddles run by two horses on a treadmill, and he would have ruined Matt and George with the expense if they had let him.

Since the excise had come in he had become interested in politics and he had gotten a crazy idea that the solution to the troubles of the western country lay somewhere in the Bible. Matt had gotten him a pair of magnifying spectacles at Mr. Scull's print shop and Old Tom had devoted himself to the Bible so intently that now he could read it almost as good as a schoolmaster and expound on it like a Methody preacher.

David felt old Barney's moist nose thrust into his palm as a perfunctory salute, then the dog trotted on ahead. He was a short-haired black-and-tan and was as reticent as his master. Not but what Old Tom was garrulous when he got

started on one of his interminable stories about the old wars.

David entered the Braddee barnyard. It was a bare muddy stretch that reeked with the odors of poultry and cattle. Around it a hen house, a corn crib, a root cellar, a bake oven, a wash house, and a negro cabin were ranged with house and barn in a rough quadrangle, with the house closest to the river. Several cows and pigs dozed lazily in the lee of a straw stack or rooted half-heartedly at its base. The house was of the type common in the vicinity—two log cabins with an open passage between. One cabin was used as kitchen, living room, and family workshop, and the other cabin and the lofts were used for sleeping rooms and storage.

Big Matt was seated at a deal table wagging his beard disconsolately over his accounts, and George sat in sympathetic gloom at his elbow. Thomasina Pancake rotated between hearth and table while she singed and cleaned a brace of chickens for supper. She was a large, handsome, black-haired woman, physically the female counterpart of Matt, taller than George by three inches and fifty pounds heftier. She was a woman born to command, as George often remarked without bitterness, and she found it a light task to run the farm in the absence of the menfolk on the river. Of course she had her three children and a negro couple for help and Matt's married son Dick farmed the far acres, but she was the head-push and no mistake. Old Tom had long ago yielded control of the farm to Thomasina and had even given over offering advice on how it should be handled. There had been a battle royal between them for a decade, ended only when the old man had tacitly admitted that his daughter knew more about farming than he did, while she had accorded him a Pyrrhic victory by acknowledging that he knew more about hunting

and trading than she did. Since that they had been allies. She had withstood Matt when he chided the old man for his zany notions and Tom had fought for her whenever Matt or his sons had tried to interfere with the management of the farm.

Big Matt's even good-nature had yielded to his sister's domination years before, except where his wife or children were concerned, but it had not been until after the death of his wife, Elsa, that he had bought the keelboat and taken to the river. David was not alone in his suspicion that both Matt and George followed the river because they wanted to get out from under Thomasina's thumb. David and Lank had been glad to leave the farm for the boat two years before to take the places of young Dick, who had married, and young Tom, who had gone to join St. Clair in the Territory and had had his hair lifted by a redskin at the defeat. Matt's daughter, Gertie, had married a big Breton sailor named Hercule Odet, who had found his way by some chance to the backwoods, and they had removed to Kentucky many years before. The other daughter, Elsa, or Elzie, as she was usually called, had married Squire McKaig and settled a few miles up Shirtee.

At the present moment Thomasina was delivering a diatribe upon the folly of buying "furrin'" goods. "This buyin' goods people can't afford will be the ruination of the western country," she closed snappishly.

"If they don't buy them," pointed out Big Matt mildly, "there'd be no work fer me an' George an' the boys."

"You kin stay home on the farm whar ye belong," countered Thomasina.

"It ought ter make the western country as strong an' rich as the down country some day," persisted Big Matt. "Hit's the makin' of things an' exchangin' them thet makes men rich."

"Humph!" sniffed Thomasina. "You're gittin' poorer."

Matt sighed with gentle resignation. "I know," he said, "but that's my hard luck."

Thomasina looked up fretfully as David entered and pounced upon him at once.

"What's this," she demanded, "about you gittin' took before Squire McReady for fightin' Mike Fink, and bein' mixed up in the raisin' of a liberty pole, and strikin' a gentleman at Ormsby's? Ain't it bad enough for all of you ter make spectacles of yoreselves marchin' around the streets actin' like wild Injuns without you gittin' mixed up in a fight and insultin' a gentleman—"

"Now, Seena," interrupted Big Matt, "ye haven't given the lad a chance ter git a word in edgewise. Maybe it ain't as bad as ye think."

"You mind yore own business, Matt Braddee," said Thomasina tartly. "You're not on your boat now."

"But it is my business," said her brother mildly. "After all, David is my boy—"

"No more yore's than he is mine," retorted Thomasina. "Haven't I taken as much of an interest in him as you have? Haven't I treated him like he was one of my own? Yore boy, humph!"

Thomasina completed her victory with a crushing look of contempt and swung back on David. To her men were nothing more than over-sized children who had to be chastized with a heavier hand even than when they had been small. David saw in her eyes that she classed him now as a man and that from henceforth she would bring to bear her heaviest artillery in the campaign to conquer him. He had seen her do it with Dick and young Tom and it looked as if he was next. She was like a mother bear cuffing a yearling cub into submission while she lavishes all her sweetness upon her latest progeny. Hot rebellion rose in

him. She had been good to him, he admitted, but by the holy poker she was not going to ride over him rough-shod like she did the rest of the family.

"All right, David," said Thomasina, "what's your side of the story?" David could tell by that *David* that her dander was up, but he slowly began to unbuckle his belt.

"I'll tell you all about it, Aunt Seena," he said slowly, "but if you interrupt me with one God damn word I'll leave this house and never come back as long as I live."

Thomasina's jaw dropped with astonishment and David could see out of the corner of his eye that his father was wide-eyed. Nobody had dared talk to Thomasina like that since the last time she and Old Tom had fallen out. David threw his belt on a stool—according to his aunt's long-standing edict he should have hung it on a peg behind the door—and began drawing off his hunting shirt.

"Is it agreed?" he asked, "or do I get my things and go back to town?"

Thomasina gulped twice and stared dumbly.

"And another thing," continued David, "I'm starting to the Pittsburgh Academy Monday. I'm going to be a lawyer." He hadn't made up his mind about being a lawyer until the words were coming out of his mouth, but now he knew that the decision had been inevitable since the hour he had first talked to Brackenridge. He threw his hunting shirt on the settle and sat down comfortably beside it.

"Ain't this kind of sudden like?" put in Big Matt.

"Not very," rejoined David grandly. "I been thinking about making something of myself for a long time." It had only been since yesterday, he bethought himself, but let it pass. It did seem like it had been a month since he had steered the "Elzie" into Pittsburgh barely thirty-five hours before.

"I seed the way Lawyer Brackenridge argued for Sam

Brady," he went on, "and then how he got me out of Squire McReady's clutches and I decided that there was the life for me."

"How long will it take, son?" ventured Big Matt.

David waved a hand airily. "I dunno. Maybe three years, maybe five."

"It'll take a power o' money, won't it?"

"No, dad. Lawyer Brackenridge says the tuition is twenty-five dollars a year. I can rent me one of the movers' cabins for a dollar a month—"

"—and you can take enough plunder from here to fix it up," interrupted Thomasina, "and you can have flour, and hominy, and bacon, and anything else we got to eat."

David almost forgot to conceal his astonishment as he looked at his aunt. It must have been the prospect of having a lawyer in the family that had won her. Now that he thought of it he remembered that she had always nagged Dick and Tom to make something more than farmers or boatmen of themselves. Maybe she wasn't so far wrong about men needing a woman's sense to steer them. He managed to nod gravely.

"Yes," he said, "and I can come back home and work Sundays and a-tween quarters."

"You won't have time for that, Dave," said Thomasina earnestly, "and besides Pa don't take kindly of late to havin' us put in Sunday a-farmin'. He says the Good Book is agin it."

So the old man was beginning to rooster up again! Maybe Aunt Seena was getting soft.

"Ain't you forgettin' to tell us about what happened to you in town?" said George, who had been an interested but discreetly silent listener.

"Why so you have, Dave," said Thomasina. "You sort of got us kerflummixed about having a lawyer in the family."

David told such of his adventures as he chose, laying special stress upon Lawyer Brackenridge's share in them, while Matt pushed aside his accounts and Thomasina forgot her promise not to interrupt, but asked her questions with a moderation that was almost respectful.

When he had finished, David went into the passageway between the cabins, stripped off his shirt and trousers, and splashed water from a bucket over his body, which was still streaked with the mud that had dried on him after he had been thrown into the river. There were angry red scratches all over his body. The longest of them down the center of his solar plexis skipped his navel and bisected the handle of the tomahawk-shaped winespot just below. It was lucky to have a winespot, people said, especially if it had a recognizable shape; then the object that it was like would play an important part in the person's life. David grinned at the thought as he rubbed goose grease on his scratches, for he had a superb contempt for such old wives' fancies. Of course a tomahawk would be important in his life; it would be in anybody's.

He climbed the ladder to the loft and sought clean shirt and trousers in his war bag. Old Tom was sitting by the window in the gable looking very venerable in his spectacles and moving his lips as he read his Bible.

"I heerd ye below, Davy," he said. "Ye've diskivered the only way to handle Seeney, and likewise the only way to handle anybody. Remember that when ye git to be a lawyer."

David pulled a walnut dyed linsey-woolsey shirt over his head. As his eyes emerged he saw Old Tom remove his spectacles and wave them for emphasis.

"And when ye git to the time when the other feller can draw the bead on ye fust and when somebody has to kill

yore snakes fer ye, then ye might as well turn in yore plunder, son. The melishy's through with ye. And ye'll want to be dead anyway. Ye might as well be dead in yore grave as dead on yore feet."

Chapter 12

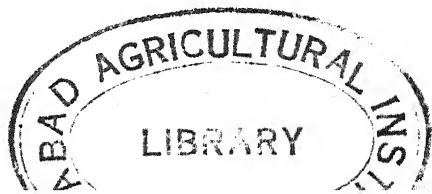
THE NEXT DAY WAS OLD TOM'S "PREACHIN' SUNDAY," AS he called it, and the people from many miles inland gathered to hear him. Dick Braddee with his wife and two infants came to dinner, and the McKaigs arrived in time to have a visit with the family before the neighbors gathered. The Braddee clan was black-haired and black-a-vised, and, save for Old Tom and Thomasina, they moved and spoke with a dreamy stateliness that might have characterized a herd of black oxen chewing the cud of reflection in contented mediocrity. Even the Pancake and McKaig children, down to the latest infant, bore the tribal stamp. Those who remembered Old Tom's wife, long since dead in an Indian village beyond the Ohio, knew that it was she who had laid her unhasting placidity upon her descendants. Poor woman, she had needed all her evenness of disposition to cope with her husband's stormy temperament and fickle feet.

But now the Braddee placidity had given place to interest, as was indicated by the gentle glow on the faces of the clansmen. The talk was of perils from storm, and snags, and savage foes; of the fever and ague that burned and shook in turn; of the high and mighty whiskerandoes that ruled the lower river and would allow American traders to enter only if they swore allegiance to the King of Spain. Yes, they'd sworn allegiance to the king, the hull passel of 'em. Yes, guess it was treason, if you wanted to bite off a flea's wings, but it was the only way they had of getting into the country.

The neighbors began to drift in and they must hear the story repeated and demand if it was true that they buried folks above ground in Orleans. Yes, it was true; the place was so damp that if you left your shoes on the floor overnight they was covered with mold. Could you hear them bull alligators roaring in the swamps? Sure, sometimes; it was enough to raise the hair on a man's neck. If one o' them fellers ever got you by the laig you'd be a gone goose. No, guess we wa'n't the first keelers to come up from Orleans—maybe to Pittsburgh, yes. Lots of others had come up to Lo'ville. It must be a sight of labor, walkin' a keel all the way from Orleans. Sure it was, in case anybody should pop up out of a mudhole and ask you. Nigh on to two thousand miles, it was, poling, bushwacking, or a-pulling on the cordelle, as the Frenchies called it. Yeah, the tow rope. And you had to row across the river at damn near every bend to keep from getting piled on the bank.

Old Tom hunched on the settle and listened silently to the jabber of his descendants with a contempt that had grown more tolerant of late years. They were living exactly such lives as Jacopa would have mapped out for them—leastways when they was to home. Her home and truck patch had always meant more to her than anything else, and she had stuck to them even at the expense of having her husband maintain another wife in the Indian country. The old man's eyes dimmed a little as he thought of his big Dutch wife and he wished that he had made up to her more before her tragic death at the hands of the savages. Maybe his old age wouldn't be so lonely and so haunted by the regrets that had never troubled his haler years.

Looking at Seena like this a body would have thought Jacopa had come back, except that Jacopa was slower and more placid. That Seena was a catamountain and no mis-



take. She'd run the farm her own way so much that finally Old Tom had offered to turn it over to her and Matt on condition that they support him as long as he lived and tell no one but the prothonotary about the arrangement. He wanted to save that much of his face anyway.

He looked at David sitting at the opposite end of the room. The slanting beams of the early afternoon sun entered at the open casement and brought out the ruddiness of his skin and the copper tints in his auburn hair. When at rest his features bore the same dreamy vacuity that characterized his foster family, and for that matter all the people of the border, but there was a latent vitality about him that might be summoned into swift, explosive action at any moment. It was this quality, thought Old Tom, that had drawn him to the lad from that day more than ten years before when he and Matt had found David crouching under a hazel bush on Laurel Mountain after the people with whom he lived had been massacred by Indians.

It had been just such a cool, self-confident vitality as this that had drawn him to Dick Penburne forty years ago. In fact, most of the gentry that came West to live were like that—and more. Restless, quarrelsome, bull-headed, and often high-handed, they lived with a zest that was part and parcel of the old days. Chaffering with the Indians, fighting the French, drinking the officers of the British garrisons under the table, and creeping under the dirty blankets of questing Indian sluts. That was the way life was lived then. You lied, and cheated, and stole when you could do it safely, and if you were lucky you got some Indian chief drunk and got him to put his mark on a deed to ten thousand acres of land. Then like as not you knocked up his wife or his daughter and cleared out to live like a king in Philadelphia. Anyhow him and Dick hadn't done so bad by themselves. It was only because Dick had lit on the wrong

side in the Revolution that he was now a Creek sachem instead of a respectable merchant and landholder of Pittsburgh.

Anyhow those were the qualities that had made the leaders of the old West—the same men that were now sitting at Ormsby's with loosened belts, nodding into the rolls of fat under their jaws. Anyone, whatever his birth, might have been accepted if he was able to lift himself above the rabble of common traders, soldiers, and packers. Old Tom, himself, at one time might have made the riffle if he'd been able to write script as well as he could read print. But it was too late now. Ormsby's doors were closed on those who had not previously qualified.

Or were they? Old Tom's whiskers wagged solemnly as he mumbled. There would always be men who would get ahead, even though the rules of the struggle might change from generation to generation, and it did look harder to get ahead. The men that had won their way to the top by bull strength, and shrewdness, and hardness of heart were entrenching their positions for themselves and their descendants. They still accepted as an equal a professional man, or a merchant who had made a pile of money, but that was about all. Money and gentility were the best pass words now. Times sure had changed. Men were getting softer.

Now there was Dick Penburne's son, Jack. He'd been brought up on the border and had done his share of fighting on the right side in the war, but now he was living in Philadelphia like a gentleman. When Dick had lost all he had on account of the American victory John had refused to accept the property from the state until he had paid a fair price for it to his father. Well, grinned Old Tom, that was more than Dick would have done for his old man. There was no doubt about it, Jack belonged to a softer generation.

Old Tom shook his head dolefully. He pitied the young

men of today. The border had gone on and left them content to roll like placid old horses in their smooth green pastures, too fat in the back even to turn over. They would never know the feel of the damp trail under their moccasins, never crouch behind a tree with heart palpitating furiously under buckskin hunting shirt but with hand steady on trigger, while a redskinned varmint stalked them. They'd never know what it was to be alone with not another white man in two hundred miles, but free and independent as a man ever could be on this green footstool. He straightened up and a light came into his eyes. His whiskers wagged faster as his mumbling became more excited. Sure, the Injuns had put up some right smart battles recently, but things wasn't like they had been in the old days. The sun wasn't as hot nor the ice as cold; the white lads wasn't as good at woods lore, and even the Injuns was getting tired and discouraged. People didn't think now of much but money and manufactures. No more zip to 'em now than there was in a last year's snakeskin. If they didn't move now and then you'd of thought they was dead. That hadn't been the way with him and Dick. They'd had a gay time helling around on the old border, what with fighting, trading, drinking, and wenching.

But them days was gone. Law and physic had caught up with them now and a man could no longer call his soul or his bowels his own. The tapping of hammers on anvils, the clatter of looms, and the smoke from the chimneys of manufactories was getting more noticeable every time he visited Pittsburgh. Men in grimy leather aprons now toiled where him and Dick had fit the French or wassailed with their arms around the coffee-colored Injun gals. The stores was stuffed with silks and tea gear and a passel of other gauds to lure a man into debt so that the gentry could rob him of his land and break his spirit. Officers of

the law was descending over the land like a plague of grasshoppers, and the lawyers was waxing fat on the spoil of the poor. The long lash of the federal government was reaching out across the mountains to remind them that they belonged to the United States. Damn the United States! Give him youth and freedom once more and he'd show 'em whether they could saddle him with courts and laws and make him pay an axcise on his likker.

He rose excitedly to his feet and fumbled with a large square of white linen that hung on the back of the settle. Thomasina held it while he thrust his head through a hole in the center so that the cloth hung around him in four triangles and gave him a kind of rustic venerableness. The audience had become respectfully silent and Old Tom, as he straightened up under the rude mantle, seemed to shake the kinks from his back and take on some of the stature that had once been his.

"Neighbors," he began, "I will talk to ye today on Ezekiel's vision of the tample with its walls round about and of the rivers thet rise to the eastward. The prophet tells as how he war transported to the top of a high mounting whence he could look down on the frame of a great city. Then thar came a man with a countenance like unto polished brass and with a measuring rod in his hand. And the man said, 'Behold with thine eyes and hyar with thine years on all thet I'll show thee, and declare it all to the house of Israel.'"

The old man moved away from the fireplace and those in the center of the room crowded toward the sides. His arms flailed under the mantle and found their way out where they could beat the air. He paused for a moment and looked Dick Braddee in the eye while he spoke to the young man as if he were the sole listener. Then he moved on to the end of the room and turned. His voice was

now loud, now low, and the pace of his speech hastened or slackened with the speed of his step. The soft drawl of his ordinary speech gave way to a harsher timbre and he emitted the labials with an explosive force that formed a fine spray before him as he moved. He spoke of a jumble of gates, and pillars, and walls, and cubits, of the abominations of the children of Israel, and of the purifying waters that ensued from beneath the altar. His listeners hung breathlessly on his words and when his voice lowered as he stood and talked to an individual they strained forward to catch every sound. Even the children seemed fascinated by his wagging tobacco-stained beard and the strange garment that swirled with the vigor of his gestures. The minutes fled unheeded by the entranced audience.

"Neighbors," the old man said presently, "I will intarperit unto you the vision of the prophet. The temple of which he spoke is the western country in which we live; the walls air the mountings thet surround us, and the gates air the gaps through them; the rivers thet issue from under the altar air the Allegheny and the Monongahela with their little creeks and runs.

"This western country of ours is the holy country of God from which we have driv out the Injuns even as Joshua driv out the Canaanites. This is the land whar the Lord will place his throne, whar he shall rest the soles of his feet, whar his name shall be worshipped forever and no more be defiled."

He spun about and spread his arms so that the linen mantle seemed to make him a prophet of wrath.

"But, oh my friends, how fur we air from that state today! We air a land on the brink of ruin. The savages knock at our western gate and our traders air not given the freedom of our rivers. The gentry sit in their town houses like the whoring kings of Israel eatin' up the sub-

stance of the poor, and the federal gov'mint sends its buzzards to prey on what is left. The meenisters have polluted the sanctuary by bowin' the knee to Baal, they have not kept charge of my holy things, saith the Lord, but have made themselves full with the burnt offerings and drunk with the wine of sacrifice."

He stopped in front of David and thrust his beard within a few inches of David's face. The explosions of his labials drove his tobacco spittle into David's face, and the young man compressed his lips to keep it from his mouth. Yet he could not have moved away for there was a glitter in the old man's eye that held him spellbound; he felt as if something of his grandfather's vitality was flowing into him. All that had gone before was only the prelude to this moment, and they two were the only ones who shared it.

"Rise, young man, in yore stren'th," said Old Tom—and there was a fire and resonance in his voice that had not been there for years—"cast out the idolaters from the holy tample of the Lord, break the bones of the money changers with stones, and sever the necks of the kings with axes. Cleanse the blood of unclean beasts from off the holy altars and purge the unclean women from the holy courts. Blow the trumpets thet the people may bow before the great Jehovah and mourn in sackcloth and ashes their departure from his ways.

"For I say unto you, if ye do not these things, if ye continue to harden your hearts and stiffen yore necks, then the Lord shall descend upon you as a great storm from the mounting, he shall scatter you like chaff in the whirlwind, he shall drive you utterly from this land and give it to a people more worthy. I, the Lord God have spoken. 'This is the law of the house; upon the top of the mounting

the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy. Behold, this is the law of the house.'"

The old man moved away and his voice softened as, carried away by an enthusiasm that made him forgetful of his yearning for the old days of dangerous living, he painted a picture of the great days that were to come. Peace would dwell in every mountain valley, the settler would journey to the water mill without fear of savage raids, and the young man and the maid would court in peace and in peace push out into the wilderness to build their cabins. Floods and game would no more ravage the cornfields, and the Injuns would come only to dispose of their prime furs at the trading posts. The power of the land speculator would be broken and every man should have his hundred acres without let or hindrance by unjust laws. The excise-man would come no more with book and branding iron, nor would the federal sheriff drag the 'stilling farmer to trial across the mountains, for the accursed yoke of the down country congress and of the grasping western gentry should be removed and the people should live only by the light of God's word.

And the rivers, the holy rivers of God, should nourish the land until it burst with fat. Everything that lived and moved whithersoever the rivers came should prosper, and the waters should be filled with such a draught of fishes that the settlers' children would wade in and catch them in their hands, while the pools would abound with otters bearing only prime fur. And by the river, on this side and on that, should grow all trees for food, and their leaves when dipped in the waters below and bruised on stones should be for the healing of all ailments because the waters, they issued out from under the sanctuary.

Old Tom sank exhausted on the settle. The neighbors filed out of the cabin and the family followed. Now he was

alone. He let his shoulders sag with the weariness that pervaded his whole being, body and soul. He wasn't used to talking an hour at a stretch like this. It wasn't as if he'd spent his life at it like the meenisters. Now that he thought of it, he had let the weariness of old age lure him into painting the glories of peace. He wasn't so sure he believed all he had said, but one thing he did know—he had meant every word he had said about the gov'mint.

He straightened up suddenly. By the sacred flame of Onondaga! Maybe it was right that people should change when times did. He had swum rivers floating with ice, and dined off buckskin, and fit Frenchies and Injuns and lobsterbacks in turn, but them had been the things that belonged in a forester's life. He'd look a purty picture now, an ignorant old border man trying to lick the gentry at their own game, played to rules they had made up since his day. That was a job for the young men like David. Maybe they couldn't shoot as straight, or run as far, or find a trail as easy, but they had something he lacked. They would be able to meet the gentry and beat them at their own game. Anyhow, God help the western country if they couldn't.

Chapter 13

WHEN DAVID MADE INQUIRY IN PITTSBURGH ON MONDAY morning he found that Mr. Beaumont owned several of the immigrant cabins on the bank of the Monongahela, and was willing to let him have one of them for a dollar a month provided that he would agree to occupy it for a year. David paid over a quarter's rent to bind the bargain, then he went out to make his selection along with Big Matt and Lank, who had carried part of his food and equipment from the Rocks.

The cabin that he chose was a small log structure about ten feet square, placed well back from the river bank near the spot that the surveyor's map would have designated as the intersection of Front Street and Cherry Alley, but that in reality was nothing more than intersecting streaks of mud in a commons pasture. The cabin, however, was fairly tight, and but little work would be needed to make it liveable. The chimney was built of rough stone to a distance of about six feet from the ground; the rest of it was stick and mud, so of course was in perennial danger of catching fire. The floor was nothing more than packed earth, but Matt volunteered to bring some puncheons for floor boards from the farm the next time he came up with the "Elzie." Some shingles would also come in handy, he opined as he pointed his beard at the spots of daylight showing through the roof, and there was no reason why David shouldn't have one of the bed frames from the loft. The rawhide cords would be a lot easier to sleep on than a puncheon, and then he could hitch the frame to the wall

with rawhide hinges so that it could be folded up out of the road when he didn't need it.

Lank went off to the river bank to get a bucket of mud for patching, and Big Matt departed to see if Major Craig could give him lading for Fort Washington. David hung on wall pegs such of his scanty possessions as he could, and what wouldn't hang up he deposited on the floor. Every stick of furniture and every shelf that could be detached had been carried off by the Methodist family that had last occupied the cabin, though they had stopped short of removing the window sash with its four small panes. Not that it mattered greatly. They could easily be replaced by a few hours labor with hammer and saw. Fortunately the cabin door opened toward the academy building, which was located a long stone's throw farther inland, so that he could keep an eye on his plunder. In fact, it might pay to get him a padlock with a key. Immigrants weren't the only folks that liked to take anything they found lying around loose.

Lank returned from the river and began slapping mud into the crevices of the logs, giving David's war bag a liberal sprinkling at the first handful. David piled all his plunder in the middle of the floor and departed for town. He had a good hour yet before school took up, so he'd see about that padlock. Then a fellow had to have a slate and pencils, and some paper to use in making books. He reckoned that he could make all his own textbooks for a while, at least until he got started with Latin.

Since they were to be used in protecting his own property Mr. Beaumont let his new tenant have a padlock and hasp for two bits on condition that he return them when he vacated the cabin. When David asked for paper the merchant stated that he did not have much variety in stock;

Mr. Scull, the printer, would be a much better man to see about that.

The office and print shop of Mr. Scull, David found upon investigation, occupied a lean-to attached to the printer's residence on Front Street. The shop may have been twelve by twenty feet, and was literally stuffed with printer's paraphernalia. A type font and a printing press occupied one end of the room, and a lad of fourteen was painfully filling a compositor's stick while his tongue waved at odd angles in sympathetic bewilderment. A huge cupboard, crammed with newsprint, stationery, and books, occupied the space behind the front door, and opposite it stood a pine table littered with newspapers and manuscripts. In this little shop Mr. Scull, with the assistance of his apprentice lad, published the *Pittsburgh Gazette* and the *Pittsburgh Almanac*, did job printing, even to the ambitious task of printing the latest volume of Mr. Brackenridge's *Modern Chivalry*, ran a stationery and book store, and as if that were not enough, kept post office in the rack of pigeon holes suspended on the wall above the printer's table.

As David entered, the printer looked up from his table where he was engaged with paste pot and scissors selecting items for the next issue of the *Gazette*. He was a thin, nervous-looking man still under thirty, and so near-sighted that when he absent-mindedly took off his glasses and laid them down, as he sometimes did, he had to grope blindly among the papers on his desk until he found them. He was not possessed of much sense of humor, but the conscientious frown on his forehead betokened a sense of the vast reality and earnestness of life.

Mr. Scull, it turned out, knew just the kind of paper needed by an academy student. He produced several sheets of foolscap and folded them neatly once. The paper was

good and strong, he pointed out, and would hold the stitch nicely. Two dozen sheets? That would be one bit. How about pens and ink now? Oh, you aim to make your own. As a matter of fact, most of the Academy boys do. Quite right, too. A penny saved is a penny earned. Sam, *must* you stick out your tongue like that whenever you set type? If you don't watch out, you'll get it covered with ink.

The door swung open and Lawyer Brackenridge entered, comparatively resplendent in mouse-colored knee breeches and snuff-brown coat.

"Good morning, John," he said. "Good morning, David. John, I want you to do everything you can for David. He is my latest and most valued client, and in addition a fellow poet."

"Indeed," said Mr. Scull.

"Yes, not to mention his prowess at cutting down liberty poles."

"Oh," said Mr. Scull dryly, and his tone was as clear a comment upon political issues as if he had printed a two-column article in the *Gazette*.

"Have you found a place to live, David?" asked the lawyer.

"Yes, sir. One of Mr. Beaumont's cabins, not far from the Academy."

"Good. I'll drop around and visit you. Here. I want to have the honor of being the first author in your library."

The lawyer stepped to the cupboard and selected a small paper-covered pamphlet, which he handed to David.

"The third volume of my *Modern Chivalry*," he said, "printed by Mr. Scull. I flatter myself that it is the first book in English ever printed west of the mountains."

"Thank you, sir," said David. "I shall always treasure it." He could not help thinking, though, that he'd a power

rather had one of them books with all the words in them. A dic— dic— well, whatever they called it.

"As a student at the Academy, now," put in Mr. Scull briskly, "you will find the *Gazette* invaluable. It keeps the up-and-coming citizen informed of what is going on in the world from Teneriffe to Timor—wars and rumors of wars, royal marriages, letters and inventions, market quotations, and the wits' latest sayings. There are poems, political discussions, dissertations for the agriculturist, and moral tales for the young. Also what letters lie unclaimed in the post office."

"What does it cost?" said David.

"Seventeen shillings, sixpence, per annum."

"But," thrust in Brackenridge, "you will find Mr. Scull disposed to consider a trade—a keg of good rye, well aged, a half dozen twelve-pound hams, or perhaps a hundred-weight of flour."

David laid a small piece of silver on the table and rolled up his sheets of foolscap.

"I shall consult my larder," he said gravely as he opened the door and backed out. The two men laughed and David allowed a twinkle to light his eyes as he nodded his head and closed the door.

The Academy building was small, not more than twenty by twenty-five feet, and it was built of squared logs. This last had been a point of some contention among the trustees and townsfolk, for a few old-fashioned souls objected to the expense of squaring logs when round ones would have done just as well for a schoolhouse. However, Mr. Brackenridge, who was in a real sense the father of the Academy, had stuck to his guns and in the end won a victory for squared logs.

Even squared logs, he asserted, were not material worthy of the dignity they sheltered, and he was already talking

up a project for erecting a brick building for the Academy, much to the alarm of the citizens who would have limited education to the three R's. There was no telling, they complained, where such foolishness might lead. Why, the Academy might even be putting up a four-story stone building like that one at Princeton, and everyone knew that it was just eating off its head. When Mr. Brackenridge was informed of these complaints he admitted brazenly that it was a good idea. No building was too high or too fine, he said, to serve as the palladium of learning, and he hoped that the time would come when education would look down from the clouds at a better and fairer Pittsburgh that it had helped to create.

But meanwhile the lads and lasses of Pittsburgh studied in their log schoolhouse. Reading and a just pronunciation, said the prospectus in the *Gazette*, were a peculiar object of attention; orthography was taught agreeable to the standards of the first taste; the student was drilled in penmanship until he could write like copper plate; and arithmetic was taught to the rule of three. Beyond those elements young men who so desired could take up the learned languages, English, French, mathematics, natural, civil, and ecclesiastical history, astronomy, natural philosophy, logic, moral philosophy, and chronology, surveying, and navigation. And the whole curriculum was taught by two young bachelors, George Welch and Peter Schilling, who lived together in the loft over the schoolroom.

What little education David had gained had been taught to him by the family, principally by Aunt Seena and his fostermother, Elsa Braddee. This was his first visit to a schoolroom and he looked about curiously at the maps and pictures on the walls and the globe by the master's desk. Boards, hinged to the walls so that they could be let down when there was a meeting in the building, were

used as desks, and the seats were rough puncheon benches. Two short tables in the center of the room were used by the masters and on them stood books and the rude instruments used in scientific and mathematical instruction.

A pleasant-faced young man at the desk nearest the fireplace looked up from his book as David entered.

"Good morning," he said. "You are our first pupil to enroll this term. There should be others soon. My name is Peter Schilling, assistant to Mr. Welch, the principal."

"I'm David Braddee from the Rocks," said David. "I ain't never been to a regular school before."

"David Braddee? Of course. Mr. Brackenridge mentioned you only yesterday."

Peter Schilling shook David's hand and motioned him to a bench. In spite of his position as teacher David judged that there could not have been more than three or four years difference in their ages. He knew at once that he was going to like the Academy. He drew a small leather bag from his hunting shirt and counted out a Pennsylvania paper pound, three Spanish dollars, a half a dollar, and four English copper pennies.

"I'll give it a whirl for a quarter, anyways," he said.

The schoolmaster gravely wrote out a receipt for six dollars and a quarter. "I see that you know some mathematics," he said.

"I went to the rule of three," said David a little proudly.

"Good. Let's try your orthography."

When the spelling test was finished David had little cause to be proud, but Peter comforted him with the assurance that, as yet, no one really knew how words should be spelled. That had always been David's own opinion, but it was the first time he had heard it admitted by an authority. He shone to better advantage in writing and reading and closed his book with a glow of honest satisfaction.

"You do very well, indeed," commented Peter Schilling. "Your spelling needs improvement and you could use a more just pronunciation. But they will both come with time. May I suggest that you spend a few weeks with the rudiments before you take up Latin and the higher branches?"

"Suits me," answered David.

At that moment several pupils entered, boys and girls eight to twelve years of age. Mr. Welch's feet appeared on the ladder that led from the loft and a moment later he and David were introduced.

"Suppose," said Peter Schilling to David, indicating a column of words in a spelling book, "that you write these in your copy book and learn to spell them. Later on we'll take up their pronunciation."

David retired to a spot beneath a south window where he could look out at his cabin and the towering heights of Coal Hill. Lank was daubing the chimney now as he clung precariously to the rotting shingles of the roof. He'd have a snug little harbor there, thought David, as soon as it was fixed up. Maybe he could even save on expenses by taking in a partner. He looked about the schoolroom where Mr. Welch was enrolling several boys in their teens. All of them wore smallclothes and tailored coats. Not a pair of jeans or a hunting shirt in the outfit. Well, what of it? None of them had ever steered a keelboat into Pittsburgh. He guessed he could hold his own even with the sons of the gentry. He drew his hunting knife and sharpened a quill with its razor-keen edge, shook up the ink in his horn and became absorbed in his copying.

The next thing he heard was a sharp tapping on the principal's desk. David looked up with a start. Mr. Welch was standing with a book in his hand. The room was silent now, and the other students were looking at David, some of them

on the verge of tittering. David reddened and closed his copy book. Mr. Welch began to read:

The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel;
To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding;
To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity;
To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion.
A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels:
To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings.
The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.
My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother:
For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck.

The principal closed the book and the students stood while he offered a short prayer. But David heard nothing of the invocation though he stood like the rest with eyes closed. Those oddly familiar cadences with their glowing words were still beckoning him, pointing to a realm of light and understanding beyond the darkness in which he stood. He opened his eyes and looked around at the maps, the books, the intent faces of masters and pupils. Yes, Mr. Brackenridge had been right. This was the first mile post on the way to the delectable country.

Chapter 14

DAVID STOOD AT HIS CABIN DOOR AND LOOKED UP AT THE cloud-flecked, moonlit sky. Small objects crossed the silver orb of the moon and faint and faraway he heard the honk of belated wild geese. He thought of that night when he had stood outside of Mother Pearson's shebang and listened to that eerie call, then had struck his fist on the logs because of the nameless longing that gnawed at him.

That had been just a year ago, but it might have been a decade. All of his life had seemed to have been lived since then. He no longer moved in the haze that had once surrounded him, but he saw the world and all that was in it brightly—from that day in 4004 B.C. when it had been created, right down to this year of our Lord 1794. Some there were, Lawyer Brackenridge among them, who cast doubts on the authenticity of the story of creation; but that bothered David little. He had not yet come to the point of criticism; he was still too busy drinking in the bright story of the world to give too much heed to its wranglings. His eyes were still so dazzled by what he had seen and learned that he could not believe that he actually existed. Somehow, he had often thought, he must have died and been re-born on another planet.

During his first afternoon in the Academy Mr. Schilling had placed before him the first volume of Mr. Brackenridge's *Modern Chivalry* and two books which he called Dr. Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary*.

"Dr. Johnson," Mr. Schilling had smiled, "has defined a dictionary as a book to make a dictionary necessary."

But David had not found that true. To him the dictionary was the most fascinating book in the schoolroom. Words were ideas and were necessary in expressing ideas, and God knew he needed some way to express what was in him. Every night he had borrowed a volume of that dictionary and in his cabin by the light of his home-dipped candle he had pored over its pages to the exclusion of his mathematics lessons. During the first few months he had read it through, pronounced every word painstakingly, and balanced the meaning of every word and illustrative quotation.

And then, through the medium of the dictionary's quotations he had discovered poetry, Shakespeare, Pope, Dryden, Spenser, and a host of others. He borrowed books from Brackenridge and Scull and from the academy instructors. When Mr. Schilling had found out what he was doing he had smiled and put aside formal lessons.

"Orthography will come to you naturally," he had said. "I would ask only that you read aloud for two hours each day, and that when you come across some striking passage you put it down in your copy book."

Then one Sunday afternoon Mr. Schilling had dropped in at David's cabin and found him reading *Hamlet*. They took turns at reading aloud, with frequent stops to wrestle with "dark sayings." After that they met frequently for literary and political readings and then, at Mr. Brackenridge's suggestion, they began meeting in his law office, where he could keep an eye out for prospective clients and take a turn with his oracular periods. For a time two of the older academy boys joined them but they soon dropped out by parental request. Young Mr. Tarleton Bates, however, had come occasionally, and if anything became more regular in his attendance when it became clear that the gentry preferred that

their sons should not associate with Brackenridge even in literary exercises.

But meanwhile David had discovered Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, and all of him that was not absorbed in poetry became immersed in its pageantry. Between Gibbon and the poets David lived for a month in a lofty frenzy. He could scarcely tear himself away to go to the Rocks to replenish his larder, and when he did go he spouted poetry and history to such effect that Thomasina became his willing slave and Old Tom begged him to take a whirl at preaching.

Finally in October Mr. Schilling had laid a Latin grammar on his desk with the remark that it was time he became acquainted with poets and philosophers who really had something to say. The statement had piqued David's curiosity and he had attacked the grammar with a fury that had been the awe of the Academy boys. Three months later he was translating Virgil with the regular class and poring over the later pages to see how the story came out.

But always he had read omnivorously. The hunger he had once known had expanded into a voracity that nothing could satiate, yet strangely enough it had brought a recompense that could be expressed only by the word "awareness." The past, the present, and sometimes, David almost thought, the future lay spread out before him like a vast map that always afforded new matters of interest. He sat up at night studying this entrancing map until Thomasina was moved to chide him for using up so many candles that the family must needs sit in darkness of an evening. David heard, but nothing could have kept him from robbing the candle box; he would sooner have gone hungry than candleless. And the map grew, it covered all men, and all knowledge, all time and all space, until it seemed that his head would burst with the immensity of it. But still that enormous craving for

knowledge drove him on. Knowledge was for him awareness, and without awareness there could be no existence.

And now he stood in an ecstasy of awareness looking up at the fleecy clouds charging across a spangled sky of midnight blue. How much more immense, how much more marvelous was the universe of men and stars than he had ever dreamed, and he, David Braddee, had a part in it all. What godlike power had been added to him since he had left the "Elzie"; he could look beyond Coal Hill down the winding course of the rivers and see the movers spreading out across the great valley. He had seen it with his eyes a year ago, but now he saw it with his mind; he knew now that it was more than Dick Braddee getting married and moving to the other side of the field; it was a people moving with its chattels, its institutions, its language, its fierce hopes and hates and aspirations, spreading onward to the Spanish territory as a flood covers a plain and laps at the confining border of the hills. This was, he knew, but one phase of a westward movement that had begun before written history and perhaps was destined to go on for ages, sweeping around the globe until it was lost in its own backwash.

And to the east, beyond those mountains he had never crossed, he saw clearly the cities with their politicians, their artisans, their merchant princes. Their fleets touched at a thousand ports, ports his eyes had never seen and never would, yet which his mind brought before him as clearly as Louisville or New Orleans. He saw the British Parliament in its narrow hall, Sainte Guillotine standing red in the place of execution, the Pope of Rome enthroned on a jeweled chair; he saw the peasant at work in his fields, and the armies clashing on land and the navies on sea; he saw the Tartar hordes seething in inner Asia, and on its outer fringe scimitared caliphs on stately white camels sumptured with crimson samite, rajahs swaying in golden howdahs, and

yellow khans on peacock thrones; he saw the mounded ruins of great civilizations with their Parthenons, their Towers of Babel, and their pyramids, and knew that even now they were bathed in the yellow light of the rising sun.

How marvelous was this power of his, to see around the world and meet his returning gaze, to look up at the stars and see them marshalled in their ordered courses. He murmured aloud his old boast: "I rub my shoulders on the stars and comb my hair with a comet's tail; I pluck down the moon to light my pipe and imprison the sun for a candle beam." He struggled for a moment with a vague consciousness, a consciousness that suddenly swelled like an iridescent bubble and burst in a cloud of light. It was poetry, by God, a psalm of praise that all things were subject to his power. He had felt it before as a primitive instinct, as an infant feels the warmth of a fire on its face, but now, at last, he was aware.

He, David Braddee, had become a god; he spoke familiarly to the stars and to the elements of nature and they turned from their appointed tasks to listen as to an equal. His face was lifted to the universe and he chanted his boast like a Magian priest intoning the nightly hymn:

I rub my shoulders on the stars and brush my hair with
a comet's tail;

I pluck down the moon to light my pipe and imprison the
sun for a candle beam.

When I speak the four winds heed my voice and the ele-
ments hearken to my call.

The clouds ascend to cool my brow and the rivers lave
my dusty feet;

When I drink the Mississippi runs dry and I strain the
alligators through my teeth.

I hollow the lakes with the spread fingers of my hand and
fill them with the dew of the morning;

THE DELECTABLE COUNTRY

When my shadow falls athwart the sun women and children hide in the caves of the earth.

At my scream the nations quake with fear, and the beasts of the forest scrouge down in their lairs;

Strong men's bones melt like tallow and sailors scuttle their ships to hide in the depths of the sea;

It freezes the heart of Beelzebub and festoons the dome of hell with icicles.

I sweep the prairies clean of trees to make my bed and heap together the mountains for a pillow.

When I sleep the wind of my snoring crumbles the cities of the world into dust;

The reverberation shakes the mountains of the earth and they fall into the sea.

The heat of my nostrils melts the polar ice cap and floods the North American continent;

And when I open my eyes the flash is like the aurora borealis on a winter night.

It was the end of the old boast, but somehow it did not seem the end. Perhaps, if he looked again at his great map of time and space, the end would come. He turned and went into his cabin. The spring of awareness was running strong and he would drink of its unsatiating waters.

At this very moment Mr. Welch, who had gone to Mr. Brackenridge's office on Academy business, was remarking with real concern that if David Braddee kept up at this rate, in another year Pittsburgh Academy would have nothing more to offer him.

"And they said that he was incapable of learning!" exclaimed the lawyer. "Did you know, Mr. Welch, that on the day of David's enrollment I spent the afternoon in my office wrestling with certain gentlemen of the town to persuade them that it would not harm their sons to go to school with

a boatman. He would be a bad example, they said, morally and intellectually!"

"Well," hesitated Mr. Welch, "if the stories told of him are true—"

"Can you lay a finger on his conduct in the last year?"

"No—no indeed."

"Neither can they. But we must keep the lad busy, Mr. Welch, until he has forgotten all about the old life he has left. Ply him with logic, and with natural and moral philosophy. It is time that he began to *think* instead of absorbing knowledge as a sponge soaks up water."

"Very well. But is it sure that he will remain in school?"

"Remain in school! Is there any doubt of it?"

"Yes. His father seems to attract misfortune as treacle draws flies. His ventures down river have not been profitable for two years. The latest bad luck came a couple of days ago when he was hired by Captain Thorne, the new prothonotary, to pilot a Kentucky boat to Louisville, but it sank a few miles below town when a snag stove in a bow timber. Mr. Braddee claims that the snag penetrated a rotten and defective plank, but Captain Thorne is suing him for the value of boat and cargo."

"Is that the case that John Woods is handling for Thorne?"

"Yes, I think so."

"Who does Braddee have?"

"No one that I know of. He's as blue as indigo and I doubt if he'll even contest the action."

"That's no way to do. Thorne will take away everything he has. It's a neat trick. Get a judgment against Braddee and have the sheriff put his farm up to sale. Thorne then bids it in for the amount of the judgment and, presto! He has the best farm at the Rocks for the price of a flatboat and cargo.

I might accuse him of putting that rotten plank in the boat himself, if it had been possible to foresee this outcome."

"I think the farm still belongs to old Mr. Braddee," said the principal.

"Well, anyhow, it's a damnable plot." Brackenridge picked up his hat. "I think I'll walk back to the Academy with you, Mr. Welch. I'm damned if I like this practicing before justices, but I won't see an honest, hard-working man like Matt Braddee put upon."

The lawyer's rap on David's cabin door was answered by an absent-minded "Come in."

"I told you long ago that the maggots of the desire for knowledge would gnaw at you day and night," said Brackenridge as he entered. "How goes the search for the delectable country?"

David rose and placed his chair at the end of the table for his guest. "It is just as you told me that night, sir," he said gravely. "The more I learn, the more I crave to learn." He let down his bed and seated himself upon it.

"I think I have found the delectable country," he went on slowly. "All knowledge and all power seem to be unfolding before me."

The lawyer shook his head. "David, David," he said, "you are only on the verge. You will never be in it until you realize that though you seek you shall never find—and until you glory in the knowledge that however far you go yet there always will be greener pastures beyond."

The lawyer abruptly changed the subject. "Are you continuing in school, David?"

"Why, yes," said David, surprised.

"I had heard that you might find it difficult."

"It will be, sir," answered David simply, "but I had never thought of stopping."

"Is your father's legal difficulty serious?"

"It seems to be, sir," answered David, "but I have been thinking that there should be a way out. If I should go to the wreck and find a way to get out part of the rotten plank that was stove in, would it not be accepted in court as evidence?"

The lawyer rose and paced the narrow space between hearth and bed, rubbing the blue stubble of his chin with his right hand while the other hand cradled his right elbow.

"It should be," he said finally. "You would need witnesses."

"I had thought of that."

"How can you shift the cargo under water to get at the plank?"

"Dad says he thinks the hole is in the bow. Perhaps some kegs would have to be shifted, but not many."

"Good—good! It should work. I should like to be your counsel."

"We would have retained you, sir, but we could not afford the fee."

"My fee will be two sides of bacon and the pleasure of beating John Woods in court. When are you going? I want to be with you."

"I had planned on staying at the Rocks tomorrow night and going out early Sunday morning. You would be welcome there, sir, if you chose to come along."

"I shall be glad to, David. I hope that this is one of your grandfather's preaching Sundays, too. I have always wanted to hear him."

"It is that, sir. Gaffer will think he is a grand success, having a lawyer to hear him."

The lawyer was silent for a moment, turning over various methods of approach to the subject uppermost in his mind. The western yeomen, he was well aware, were as touchy in their pride as any seaboard gentlemen.

"David," he said presently, "my legal business has been flourishing so of late that I find myself unable to do all my own work. What I need is a young fellow who can write a good hand and who is clever enough to take off my mind such details as copying declarations, searching the docket, watching the entries of rules, and keeping clients from crying on my shoulder when I might be better engaged in their interests. It will be necessary also for him to act as my amanuensis at times when my nerves are troubling me. Do you think you might be persuaded to come to me? The experience will be invaluable whatever line of endeavor you follow in later years, and if you decide to take up law you could begin reading with me in a year or two."

David's embarrassment was almost as keen as the lawyer's. "Mr. Brackenridge," he answered finally, "I am not insensible of your good will toward me in making this proposition, but I feel that I must at any cost remain in school until I am better equipped to take up a profession."

"Egad, boy," exclaimed Brackenridge, "that is part of my proposition. You can attend the Academy mornings and work in my office afternoons and sometimes of an evening. I am prepared to give you board and an attic room and pay you in addition the sum of five dollars a month, which should cover your books and tuition. Don't let me down, David. I've got to find someone, and you're the only one in Pittsburgh who has the training and taste to fit the job."

"Since you put it that way, Mr. Brackenridge," said David, "I shall be honored to go with you."

"Good! I shall expect you to move your plunder over to my place tomorrow afternoon. Mrs. Brackenridge will have the attic room cleared out in the morning ready for occupancy."

The lawyer took his hat from the table and rose to go. He opened the door, then turned as if at an afterthought.

"David," he said, "as a lawyer's assistant you will have to assume a different style of dress. Go to Fenimore, the tailor, in the morning and have him take your measure for a suit of clothes, then to Wilcox for shoes. Have them charged to me as an earnest of what we are to undertake."

With this ambiguous parting shot, he closed the door in David's face, as if to forestall thanks, and set off briskly toward the village. There was Mrs. Brackenridge to be dealt with yet, and he suspected that she would not take kindly to his adoption of her system of making sudden sweeping decisions.



Chapter 15

IF SABINA BRACKENRIDGE HAD RAISED ANY OBJECTION TO TAKING a former boatman into her home, it was forgotten in her amusement when David appeared bearing his belongings in his arms, bulging under his hunting shirt, or festooned about him with rawhide strings. His skillet and two pots clanked merrily as he entered the back door and laid on black Sally's kitchen table a sack that contained several smaller bags holding beans, peas, dried hominy, corn meal, chestnuts, and the remnants of a side of bacon.

"I've come with my plunder," he announced unnecessarily, lifting his rifle strap over his head and leaning the weapon against the wall.

"So I see, David," answered Mrs. Brackenridge, biting her lips to repress a smile. "If you'll come with me I'll show you the way to your room."

David unhitched his culinary utensils, which he intended to take home to the Rocks, and left them on the floor beside the rifle. His bulging hunting shirt and overstuffed war bag rubbed both walls as he followed Mrs. Brackenridge up the narrow attic stairway, and he had to turn sideways to get through the door to the attic chamber.

"It's pretty small," said Mrs. Brackenridge, "but I guess it will serve—unless some of that plunder is for your wife."

"No, m'am," began David seriously, then stopped at sight of the roguish gleam in her eyes. He turned away to hide his confusion and his heart pounded furiously. He had almost forgotten during the last year the thrill that a pretty girl's

teasing would give a chap. He guessed they'd get along, at any rate.

When he was alone he threw his war bag on the cot and began disgorging his hunting shirt. His books, papers, and writing equipment he placed on the small table that stood by the window. A candlestick with a fresh candle in it stood on the table and as he laid beside it his supply of Aunt Seena's home-dipped candles he wondered if he had not better continue to rob the candle box at home rather than use many of Mrs. Brackenridge's candles. His extra shirt, trousers, and hunting shirt he hung on pegs set into a joist.

He might not be needing them much, now that he was to get a suit of tailor-made clothes. Mr. Fenimore had promised that the clothes would be ready for him by the end of the next week, and David felt that he could scarcely wait. Now that he thought of it he had often wondered during the past year how he would look in smallclothes and tailored coat. It was likely to be a while, anyhow, before he got over feeling awkward and conspicuous in them. Not but what he'd as good a right to them as anyone else, but he'd always been used to jeans or buckskin trousers and hunting shirt. He pictured himself in court dressed in his new clothes and giving testimony about the snagged flatboat.

"There's no doubt of it, your honor," he was saying. "This plank was too rotten to stand even a reasonable shock. The point of the snag went through it like beans through a shydpoke."

Then he thought of Starr. In a way this was her case, since it was her husband who was suing. He hadn't seen much of her during the last year—just a couple of times in the village and once at some exercises in the Academy—and yet on those nights when he could not sleep for the excitement of the new world he was living in, she had come to him in the darkness, her haunted blue eyes, wistful mouth, and pale

hair as real before his eyes as if he were actually seeing her by daylight. He wondered if he haunted her nights as she did his. That time she had been at the Academy he had felt her eyes on him and had looked just in time to see them turn away. Once in the village after they had passed he had turned to look at her and found her looking back. She had colored and hurried on, but the thrill of that moment often came back to David as he lay alone in his cabin.

Still, it wasn't fitting that he should be thinking about a married woman. Not that he thought of her as he had the sloe-eyed girl, for instance, or the women he had known down river. He had never even spoken to her but that one time in Ormsby's tavern, and she had never spoken to him, yet he felt as if he had known her all his life. Once she had even saved him from throwing up his new life and going back to the old, or worse. It had been on the night when Arcola had come to his cabin and begged him to marry her and take her down river. When he had refused she had raised her arms in the candlelight and shaken her clothing down about her feet, while he watched, fascinated in spite of himself, though he knew that if he yielded he would be forever lost. Then Starr had seemed to come between them and David had turned and stumbled out of the cabin. When he came back the girl was gone and he heard a few days later that she had gone to Fort Washington on a cattle boat.

David shook himself free from his reverie. It was time they started for the Rocks if they expected to get there in time for supper. He made his way downstairs and opened the hall door into Brackenridge's outer office. The lawyer and a rustic client were at the front door.

"Then why was the judgment against me?" the client was saying in a loud voice. "Didn't you tell me that I had the law on my side?"

"And didn't I tell the court so, too?" shot back Brackenridge.

"Did you?"

"Aye, so I did. To their faces. I told them that you had the law on your side."

The client seemed mollified by the lawyer's assurance.

"That puts a different face on the matter," said the man. "I did you an injustice."

"I am glad you recognize it, my friend," said Brackenridge. "Say no more of it. Good day, sir."

He closed the door after the client and turned away. When he saw David a sardonic smile crossed his face. He waved a hand toward the door.

"Remember one thing, David," he said. "The governor of Pennsylvania can give commissions, but only nature can give sense."

David and the lawyer crossed the Monongahela by Ormsby's ferry and walked slowly down the river road. David's cooking pans rattled about his waist while his companion talked of torts and attachments, of warrants and recognizances, and of other legal matters which under his guidance soon began to assume understandable form. David had never discussed the matter with the lawyer, perhaps because he had never made up his own mind, but Brackenridge had always taken it for granted that he was going to study law.

"It is a glorious profession—the law," said Brackenridge as they walked. "Medicine is messy and repulsive, though medicos are necessary and should be highly regarded; teaching is poorly paid and precarious, moreover it is stultifying to deal always with immature minds; no man of enlightenment, who also has a conscience, can afford to practice the hypocrisies of the ministry; ergo, there is only one profession left—the law. It affords a rigorous training of the intellect

and keeps the wits sharpened by continual tilts against one's equals. At the same time it will give a man a decent living, if only as a bill collector, while it allows him leisure for improving the mind."

"But," objected David, "is it not too much like living by the follies and hatreds of others?"

"That is a weighty objection," replied Brackenridge, "but is there anyone who does not live by the blood of his fellows? The farmer sells his wheat for food to the armies and his wool to clothe them; the seamstress stitches alike at the clothes of the harmless infant and the fine shirts of the admiral; the manufacturer's iron chain may be used in drawing a farm wagon or in shackling a slave to the galley. No, David, in this life we cannot always be sure that we will do good and never do harm. Moreover it is my contention that as a lawyer I promote peaceful settlement of differences, rather than allow them to be settled by bloodshed as they were among our ancestors. If men would learn to resort to the law more and to force less, this world would soon become the paradise that the Frenchman, Rousseau, claims it was before the setting up of kings."

By this time they had reached Sawmill Run about a mile below the Point and the place at which Coal Hill abruptly ends. As they rounded the end of Coal Hill several scattered shots echoed through the little valley and presently half a dozen horsemen emerged from a group of buildings beyond Sawmill Run and spurred upstream.

"It must be Tom the Tinker mending McCord's still," said David, referring to the humorous expression then used when the opponents of the excise shot holes in the still of a distiller who paid the excise on his whiskey. They hastened their steps and soon reached the foot-log that crossed the run to McCord's distillery. By this time the distiller and his family were standing by the run looking after the horse-

men who were making their way up the trace between two of the hills that girded the valley. McCord was a big, hairy man with a lowering countenance, and now he stood opening and closing his fists in silent, ineffectual anger. The members of the two or three neighboring families were running from their cabins or fields farther up the run.

"Did they shoot up your still, Mac?" said Brackenridge.

"They did that, lawyer," interjected Mrs. McCord, a slatternly woman dressed in a filthy homespun gown and wearing a nightcap over her unkempt hair. "Not a week agone some shpalpeen left a notice on a tree by the shtill, but would Mister McCord hearken to it—not him. He *would* go into town yisterday and rigister with Ginerall Niville. And now ye may see the bullit holes with yer own eyes—a good forty-gallon copper shtill ruint as cost us a hundred dollars and more at Mr. Beaumont's shtore."

"Hould yer tongue, Maggie," said McCord, coming out of his trance. "'Tis not seemly fer ye to rant against yer own husband like this afore the naybors."

"Did anyone recognize the men that did the shooting?" asked Brackenridge.

McCord grunted and a neighbor volunteered, "Nary a one, lawyer. They must a-come from another deestricht."

David fancied that Brackenridge's expression was one of relief, but the lawyer only went on:

"Did ye kape the no-otice, Mr. McCord?" Quite unconsciously he had dropped into the McCord's dialect and the way in which he slurred the *o* in "notice" was almost Hibernian.

"I have it," put in Mrs. McCord. "Whisht! Shean," she said to one of her jabbering offspring, "go get the Tom Tinker note from the tay canister, and be quick about it."

Brackenridge eyed the note with interest, as it was the first that had come directly to his attention. It was written

on a torn piece of ledger paper in a scrawling hand and with misspellings that may have been purposeful.

"Will ye read it aloud, lawyer?" said Mrs. McCord, eager to take advantage of every moment of prominence.

Brackenridge cleared his throat and read, with some oracularity:

"You incurage the axcise law. Looke to yore still. Tom the Tinker."

Mrs. McCord cackled inanely while her husband glowered.

"I didn't approve o' the axcise no more than they," said the latter, "but whut is a poor man to do?"

"Is it true, lawyer," put in Mrs. McCord, "that the con-griss is planning an axcise on spinning wheels and new-born children?"

"Aye, is it!" returned Brackenridge gravely. "They are even considering an axcise on nightcaps."

Mrs. McCord reached for her nightcap as if to save it from the excise and even the gloomy distiller joined in the chuckle at his wife's expense.

"Now there is a problem for you, Mr. Brackenridge," said David, when they had resumed their journey. "You would have us resort to the law more and to force less. How are we to escape an unjust law such as the excise if it is not by force? Isn't that what was done twenty years ago against the British?"

"Yes, but there is this difference now. The use of force against a federal law is likely to engage us in treason."

"Suppose it does? Were we not traitors to the king in '75 and has our new government brought us such benefits that we would gag at treason again? Has it subjugated the Indians? Has it done anything to promote ease of communication with the seaboard? Has it opened new lands to settlement? Has it opened the Mississippi to our trade? Has

it driven the British from the lake posts that were to be surrendered at the treaty of peace but that are now supplying the Indians with arms and powder for their raids on the settlements?"

"There you have me, David," replied Brackenridge, "but I must point out that all of these things take time. The new government is still tottery on its legs. It must first learn to walk."

"All right. Let us forget these things for the nonce and consider what the government has done *for* us. It has saddled on us a huge debt from the late war, it taxes the importation of the manufactured goods that we need, it drains away all our specie in payment of lands and taxes, it lays an excise on the only western product that can be easily and profitably transported down country and sets over us with book and branding iron a hierarchy of officials that eat up our substance like grasshoppers. When a 'stiller fails to register he is taken to York or Philadelphia for trial and after selling his farm and stock to meet the expense he has to support his family by day labor or leave them to starve."

The lawyer was looking at David in astonishment. "I didn't know, David," he said, "that you had such a passion in you for justice."

David made a sweeping gesture of his hand. "These are my people," he said simply. Come to think of it, acknowledged David to himself, he didn't remember having gotten so stirred up about politics before—at least not so articulately. Perhaps it was a new manifestation of the awareness that had been coming over him during the past year.

Brackenridge regarded him speculatively for a moment. "David," he said finally, "you are a young man of intelligence and with at least the rudiments of an education. It is time that you stopped striking out blindly and took thought concerning your ways and their consequences."

He stopped and looked out across the broad, muddy green Ohio to the darkling forest of the Indian country.

"Our revolution," he said, "was fought against a power three thousand miles away across a mighty ocean, a power that refused to abide by the provisions of a constitution that was intended to embrace us both. We won our independence and set up our own government under the mildest and most just constitution the world has ever seen. It is inevitable now that there should be strife between those who would appropriate power to themselves and those who would share it among the people, but the day of forcible measures is past. We have our constitution and we have our representatives in the national Congress to speak for us. These differences about which you inveigh must be settled peaceably, for if they are not one of two things will happen—we will split into as many warring little states as the Germanies and perhaps fall a prey to predatory European powers, or we will be conquered and ruled by a Caesar from our own midst.

"Even now the forces of empire are gathering. Hamilton and his friends of the Republican court itch for an excuse to raise a standing army to consolidate their power. There is reason for believing that the excise was laid to goad us into furnishing such an excuse. Only General Wayne's staunch assertion that the Legion was raised to protect the people, not oppress them, has prevented it from being used against us. The unanimity of our opposition to the excise has saved us so far, but now some genius among the large distillers has convinced them that the excise will rid them of the competition of the small fry. At the Uniontown court only a few weeks ago they met and agreed to go over to Hamilton, lock, stock, and barrel.

"With the restraining influence of wealth and respectability gone, the ignorant and irresponsible elements are

going halfway to meet Hamilton in his desire for trouble. You saw McCord's still riddled with bullets. Several collectors have been tarred and feathered and the Mingo Creek Democratic Society swears that no stills will be registered in Washington County. General Neville, the inspector of the excise, goes in such fear that he keeps candles burning at night and has armed his negroes in case of attack.

"This cannot go on forever. Sooner than we think the fat will be in the fire. At the first concerted movement of the populace to resist the excise by force Hamilton will have the excuse he wants to march an army into our midst and fasten on us a yoke that will make the Boston Acts of the British seem mild."

The lawyer placed one hand on David's shoulder while he made an all-inclusive gesture with the other.

"These are my people, too, David," he said, "and I wish them well. We have surrounding us here a wealth of natural resources of wood, and coal, and stone, and iron ore, as well as sand for making glass and clay for pottery. If we could come back in a hundred years we might well find this spot on which we stand in the midst of a city that would rival Philadelphia in size and manufactures. But we can become great only by the arts of peace and industry. When we find ourselves discriminated against, our true remedy is an appeal to the Congress and the constitution. It is for us to ally ourselves in a political body that can march to the polls, rather than to battle, and make our power felt. An appeal to arms would be the worst move we could possibly make. It would furnish the very excuse that the enemies of our liberty desire and would result only in fastening the chains of oppression tighter upon us."

Chapter 16

LAWYER BRACKENRIDGE SAT BY THE WINDOW IN THE BRADDEE kitchen and listened absent-mindedly to Old Tom give his interpretation of Ezekiel's vision of the temple; Thomasina lifted her voice in expostulation with the negro wench for paring the potatoes as if they were pumpkins; David slowly turned the spit in the fireplace while he listened to his grandfather hold forth; and Big Matt sat in a corner behind the table and glowed gently with the honor of having Mr. Brackenridge in his home.

Old Tom's querulous tones reached a climax, then he stopped expectantly. The lawyer seemed gravely to weigh the evidence presented and reach an approving decision.

"I have no doubt," he said, "but that your interpretation is analogous to the vision."

Old Tom's face shone with satisfaction and Big Matt's glow almost became a purr. Thomasina tried to frown at the wench in one direction and beam on her family in the other.

"It's the first time pappy has put it up to a gentleman of your education," she said.

The lawyer made a deprecatory gesture. "Your father is a man of discernment, Mrs. Pancake," he said. "It has been my desire for some time to hear him discourse on the prophecies. As a young man I used to whip the cat through the eastern counties and I consider myself somewhat of an authority on such matters."

"Have ye decided whether to run for Congriss yet, lawyer?" queried Big Matt.

"I am still uncertain, sir," replied Brackenridge.

"Aye?" glowed Matt. "Well, if ye do there's three votes fer ye in this house."

"Thank you, Mr. Braddee," responded the lawyer. "I'll be proud to have your support."

Captain Farrago visiting the yokelry, thought David, turning the spit. His reading of Brackenridge's *Modern Chivalry* had given him an insight into the lawyer's character and made him doubt the sincerity of his compliments. He wanted to resent the situation but he could not quite bring himself to that point. After all, the man could not be blamed for refusing to insult his hosts, and then he did have an interest in human beings, a little analytical and at times censorious perhaps, but still genuine. And there was no doubt of his good will toward the Braddees. Still, nothing that was transpiring in the kitchen, David made sure, would escape the lawyer's eye and perhaps it would appear some day in a volume of *Modern Chivalry*. Old Tom's lucubrations, now, would make fine material for Brackenridge's satirical pen, and so would Big Matt's bovine geniality and the ludicrous disparity between George and Thomasina.

The next morning the family was up before daybreak and stowed away plentiful helpings of sausages and griddle cakes by candlelight. At Thomasina's behest Old Tom stayed at home to save his strength for the afternoon's sermon, but all of the other menfolk drifted downstream to the point off Montour's Island, about five miles from McKee's Rocks, where Gurdon Thorne's boat had been sunk.

The skiff was anchored over the snagged flatboat and David stripped off his clothes and tied a rope around his waist and prepared to plunge overboard. Matt had meanwhile been feeling about with a long boathook and now guessed that the break was about eight feet under water.

The boathook was wedged in the swollen kegs in the prow of the flatboat and David followed it down into the water.

Presently he appeared above water. "I've found it," he announced through chattering teeth. "The snag's still poking through it."

"Here," said Lank, "have a swig of red-eye."

David lifted one hand from the gunnel and tilted the bottle to his mouth.

"Thanks, that's better," he said, passing the bottle back. Brackenridge leaned forward and claimed it.

"Looking at you shivering in the water makes me cold as the devil," he said. "I need some of that heart-warmer myself."

David grinned. "Pass me the wrecking bar," he directed. George passed the bar forward and Lank held it over the side. Big Matt leaned harder on the boathook to keep the skiff from swinging in the current. It would be a serious matter if David should bump his head into the boat as he came up. It was a long minute before he reappeared, blue-faced and puffing. Lank passed him the bottle again.

"Any luck?" he said.

David shook his head and took a mouthful of whiskey. "Had to move a couple of kegs first. Believe me, those things are heavy."

It was not until the fourth trip that David reappeared with a short length of timber in his hand. Brackenridge took it and examined it cursorily.

"As rotten as King George's heart," he said, and handed it to Big Matt.

The latter examined the segment and nodded his head slowly.

"Is this evidence enough, lawyer?" he asked.

"Can you get the piece on the other side of the hole, David?" asked Brackenridge.

"I can try," chattered David.

A moment later he appeared triumphantly bearing the fragment.

"It was already loose from the tree-nail," he said. "Nothing holding it in but the oakum."

Brackenridge placed the two segments of timber together. The snag had chewed away most of the ends but there were enough splinters left to show that they had once been one piece.

"In you come," he said to David. "We've got all the evidence we need here."

He wrapped the shivering boy in blankets while Matt wrested loose his boathook and George pulled in the anchor. A few strokes of the oars brought them to the island, where David rubbed himself down with a rough towel and hastily donned his clothes.

Old Tom's sermon that day concerned Elijah's slaughter of the priests of Baal at the brook Kishon, which action he wrested into an exhortation to blot out the collectors of the excise in the western country. The success of the morning's expedition he regarded as a link in the chain of the fulfillment of his beloved prophecies, a sort of preliminary triumph over the priests of Baal. When he came to recount Elijah's flight after the slaughter of the priests and his despair at being the only one left in Israel to serve the Lord, the old man went into the ecstasy with which he invariably wound up his sermons.

But Elijah was not alone, he said. There were left seven thousand men in Israel, all the knees which had not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which had not kissed him. Likewise there were left in the western country those who had not bowed down to the abominations of the federal executive, men who had banded themselves together in Democratic societies, pledged to the destruction of the excise

and the preservation of personal liberty. It was through these men that the Lord would work, smiting the priests of Baal hip and thigh and refusing to take bite or sup until not a one of them remained within this western sanctuary.

Lawyer Brackenridge listened gravely to the old man's ranting, but David, who watched him closely, fancied that his expression sometimes bordered on the sardonic. It must have been on some such occasion as this, thought David, that Brackenridge had invented his Captain Farrago, who went about vainly trying to implant sweet reason in the minds of the people. David understood now what the lawyer had been getting at the day before, when he had warned about violent measures against the excise, and he had a vision of the federalist politicians in Philadelphia eagerly waiting for such ranters as Old Tom to stir up the people to furnish the excuses they wanted. Well had Brackenridge written that in a democracy not everyone had an equal voice, for some had stronger lungs than others.

As David and Lawyer Brackenridge walked home after the sermon their talk was still of the excise and of the crescendo of popular agitation against it in the Monongahela country. The past year had not only seen the opposition enter a violent phase but it had seen the sudden growth of certain Democratic societies, patterned on those of the French Revolutionists, which forbade the enforcement of the excise and arrogated to themselves the functions of the courts. There was already talk of secession, and would-be Washingtons cast about for means to promote their own roles as leaders in the movement. Brackenridge, though he had not favored the excise, did what he could to discourage open resistance and was consequently losing the favor of the people. The gentlemen of respectability, on the other hand, because he did not come out in favor of the excise,

accused him of playing a deep game with the intention of becoming the leader of the malcontents.

His unpopularity with both sides was to be accentuated by the events of the next few weeks, aided by his genius for saying, when his personal affairs were involved, the wrong thing at the wrong time.

The day after their return from McKee's Rocks with the evidence in the Thorne case, Brackenridge remarked to David that he might as well get used to searching the prothonotary's docket and dispatched him to Captain Thorne's office to copy a declaration that had been lost. The Thornes had taken a house on Front Street soon after the captain's appointment as prothonotary, and the single front room of the house was used as an office.

At David's rap the front door was opened by a negro girl, as black as the coal from Pittsburgh's hills.

"I would like to speak to Captain Thorne," said David.

"Cap'n Thorne not at home," said the girl pertly, rolling her eyeballs at sight of the hunting shirt.

"Who is it, Buttercup?" said Starr's voice as she appeared behind the girl.

"Oh," she said, coloring at sight of David. There was a moment of strained silence, then she continued: "My husband stepped out a few moments ago but he should be back soon."

"Mr. Brackenridge asked me to copy the declaration in the case of John Wilkins versus John Harvee from the docket," explained David.

There was another awkward pause. "Won't you come in, D—, Mr. Braddee?"

It's true, exulted David, she's been thinking about me. All winter long when I lay on my bunk thinking about her, she was thinking about me.

The girl indicated a chair to David and then sat down

primly in a high-backed chair that swallowed her up as if she were a child. There was another strained silence. A row of bulky ledgers each marked "Docket" and bearing a number stood in a rough bookcase, but Starr made no effort to find the one needed. Instead, she turned to the negro girl.

"You may go back to the laundry, Buttercup," she said.

David grinned as the negro girl disappeared.

"Very appropriate name for her, ma'm," he said.

"Appropriate?"

"Yes, because it is so inappropriate."

They both laughed genteelly and felt more at ease. Starr smoothed her dress of cornflower blue and looked gravely at her guest.

"I didn't know that Mr. Brackenridge had a—a clerk."

"No more did he," answered David, "until I started with him today."

"Oh, then you've left the Academy?"

"No, I attend the Academy mornings and help Mr. Brackenridge afternoons."

Starr nodded sagely. "It must be wonderful to be going to the Academy," she said, then added wistfully, "I never had an opportunity to go to school."

"I like it," answered David. "I like it better than I did the river—and that's saying a heap."

He hesitated, then went on shyly. "Lawyer Brackenridge says that education is the search for the delectable country."

"The delectable country?"

David flushed. "He says that is knowing the world as well as the place we live in, the past as well as the present; of knowing great men and great issues so that we can learn toleration and appreciation. And yet it is like a disease, he says, and I think he is right. The more you learn, the more you crave to learn. I never seemed to live until I started to the Academy. Now I know it is not only what you were

born and what you own that makes a man worth while. It is what you *are* that counts. Even a boatman can be a great man in the delectable country—as great or greater than General Washington.”

Starr’s eyes seemed almost sightless as she listened—or was it a wall of pain that rose before her at the knowledge of what she was missing in life?

“It must be wonderful,” she said slowly. “I mean living with books, and working to be somebody in the world, and having contests with the other students, and—and—”

“We’re having a debate next Friday night,” said David helpfully.

“You are? What is the subject?”

“Resolved: That the western country is justified in seeking the repeal of the excise act. I am on the affirmative.” He hesitated a moment, then added: “I hope you can come.”

“Oh, I’d dearly love to go,” answered Starr, but her voice trailed off so abruptly that David knew she doubted her husband would take her. Her eyes were exploring the distance with that look of dumb terror that he remembered so well. A sudden wave of anger swept over him and he longed to get his hands on Gurdon Thorne’s throat. He must have made an involuntary movement, for Starr’s gaze came back to him and their eyes met in a long, deep look. Her terror and his anger, having as they did a common object, seemed to draw them together in mutual understanding. David’s eyes swam and his heart seemed to stand still for a long moment, then his vision cleared and he saw Starr’s face and neck suffused. Not a word had been spoken, but from that instant David knew that as long as he lived Starr would be the only woman for him, and she knew as clearly that somewhere, sometime, a way would be found for her to his arms.

There was no more time for small talk. They seemed to

have known each other all their lives, yet they knew so pitifully little of one another.

"The first time I saw you," said David in a voice that seemed to come from a great distance, "I thought you were a lady."

The girl shook her head. "It was the fine clothes," she said. "I was a barmaid when Captain Thorne—married me."

"A barmaid," said David, but there was no wonder in his tone. "That's not so different from a boatman." Something had told him from that night in Ormsby's tavern that she belonged with him, not with all that fine company.

"No," said the girl, "not so different." Her eyes were fixed on his, but they seemed also to be looking into the past. She felt the need of proving to him that she was not one of the gentry. "I went barefoot in the summer and wore brogans in the winter. I wore homespuns—my shift was a piece of bed ticking. I never had even a silk ribbon until after—"

She stopped abruptly. An unsteady step was on the walk outside and a hand was on the latch. A hundred questions were surging to David's tongue but there was no chance to ask them now. Captain Thorne was in the room looking uncertainly with bloodshot eyes from David to Starr. The girl's face was suffused and her eyes haunted with the old terror.

"D— D—, Mr. Braddee is here to see the docket," she stammered through lips so stiff she could scarcely control them.

"Oh, yes, David Braddee, of course," said the Captain pointedly.

"Mr. Brackenridge wishes me to copy the declaration in the case of John Wilkins versus John Harvee," said David.

The prothonotary crossed to the bookcase that bore the docket books. His walk was elaborately careful, as if he were anxious to conceal the fact that he had drunk too

much. As he fumbled with the books Starr turned in the doorway, placed a finger to her lips, and made a slight inclination of the head toward her husband. David nodded. Obviously the fine captain would not want it known to the gentlemen of respectability with whom he consorted that he had married a barmaid.

"W-a, W-e, W-i," said the captain. "John Wilkins versus John Harvee. Here it is." He slammed the heavy ledger on the table. "Be quick about it, son. I have some clients coming directly."

"With a bottle?" David wanted to say but thought better of it. He produced paper and pencil from his hunting shirt and copied diligently for five minutes while Captain Thorne nervously ruffled the papers on his desk. When he had finished David folded his paper and rose to go.

"Just a minute, son," said the prothonotary thickly. "Is your father still planning to let me take that case to court?"

"Yes."

"Doesn't he know I've got him over a barrel?"

David stifled a grin and tried to look gloomy.

"I guess he does."

"Then why in the devil doesn't he settle out of court?"

"He hasn't the money."

"Nonsense! With that big farm?"

"The farm belongs to Grandfather Braddee."

The prothonotary made an impatient gesture. "The old man made the farm over to his children six years ago on condition that they support him decently as long as he lives." He waved a hand in the direction of the bookcase. "It's here in the books. I reckon Big Matt didn't know I'd find that out."

David was taken aback but he did not propose to let it be known. He walked slowly to the door and opened it.

"Well, then," he said coolly, "you'd better take the farm."

"That's just what I'll do," said Captain Thorne, "if he doesn't pay the judgment."

David turned in the doorway and looked the prothonotary over with unconcealed distaste.

"Catching comes before hanging in this country, mister," he said, and closed the door.

Chapter 17

RESPLENDENT IN HIS NEW SUIT OF SNUFF-COLORED BROAD-cloth David walked gravely with Lawyer and Mrs. Brackenridge to the exercise at the Academy. The desks on the walls had been let down and the benches and stools arranged in the middle of the room so that the audience could face the speakers at the table near the fireplace.

The exercises held by the Academy students at the close of each quarter, and sometimes oftener, were high spots on the social calendar of Pittsburgh and were always well attended. Before it was time to begin the program it had been necessary for a group of students to bring in several planks and place them on boxes and kegs to furnish seats for the overflow. When Mr. Welch descended the ladder from the loft and tried to make his way to the front of the room he left a wake of ladies ruefully straightening their bonnets and examining their skirts where the master's shoes as he stepped from bench to bench had left bits of caked mud.

The audience rose and the Reverend Johann Weber offered an invocation. Mr. Welch then called upon the Honorable John Wilkins, associate judge of the county court, to preside. Judge Wilkins, a middle-aged merchant of the town and a brigadier-general of militia as well as a judge, made his way to the front and delivered a short address in which humor was nicely blended with a becoming sense of the dignity of learning and a respect for the importance of public education. He hoped, he said, to live to see the day when every child would be educated at public expense, so that no one individual in that respect would have an undue

advantage over his fellows. At this there was a mutter of protest among certain members of the audience and some protentious frowns, but the judge went on to announce the first speaker on the program.

Those students who were to participate in the exercises were crowded on each side of the table in what might have been called the amen corners. David was among them, facing the audience, but oblivious to everything save the luminous eyes of Starr Thorne, half shadowed by a blue poke bonnet. For the Thornes had come after all and now sat behind Lawyer and Mrs. Brackenridge and beside John Woods. The prothonotary's face was flushed and his muttered words thick, and David, even at a distance, could tell that he had been drinking again.

David was dimly conscious that Mr. Welch was speaking to him.

"Fergus McChesney is ill," the master was saying. "You'll have to support the affirmative alone. Can you do it?"

David nodded. "I think so," he said.

"Do you wish to deliver your arguments in one address or two?"

"In one."

The half dozen recitations and orations dragged on, punctuated by the polite applause of the audience. Then Judge Wilkins was introducing the subject for debate.

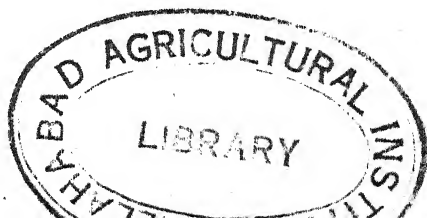
"Resolved," he said, "that the western country is justified in seeking the repeal of the excise act." The illness of the second speaker for the affirmative had made it necessary for Mr. David Braddee to support that side alone; the negative would be supported by John Harvee, Jr., and Cornelius Winegarten.

David rose in the midst of scattering and perfunctory applause. The members of the audience, he knew, though drawn from the respectables in Pittsburgh, had not origi-

nally been in favor of the excise, but were now veering over to it for reasons of which the merchants and important distillers were best cognizant. There was, he sensed, a spirit of curiosity in the room, a spirit not unmixed with hostility. A boatman debating on matters of state! Thrusting himself into the affairs of the educated and the influential and daring, even in school exercises, to challenge their decisions. Was anything better calculated to make them favor the excise!

With these thoughts in his mind David opened his address. He groped through the first sentences, fumbling for suitable words and feeling his agitation betrayed by his burning face. His eyes roved desperately over the audience seeking some responsive countenance to which he could speak and not feel his words utterly wasted. Judge Wilkins was smiling benignantly; young Mr. Tarleton Bates was regarding him with the sedately speculative air that was his habitual mask; Mr. Schilling was all interest and sympathy, but he was seated far back in the amen corner completely out of line with the audience; Judge Brackenridge's face was a study in impassiveness, but his black eyes bored through David as if challenging him to show the stuff that was in him; Mrs. Brackenridge was busily studying the bonnets of the other women, for political matters were notoriously outside her field of interest.

And then David caught Starr's eyes and found in them the message he sought. *She* was one of his own people. She understood the agony of facing a hostile room and daring to up hold an unpopular cause. After all, who had a better right to argue against the excise than one of the people whose liberties it threatened to engulf? His shoulders straightened and his head was thrown back so that the light of battle in his eyes was plain for all to see. The words were



coming now in a clear, unhurried stream; they were chosen with the skill of a rhetorician and uttered with the emphasis of a born orator.

The excise, he said, threatened the ruin of western livelihood on four counts. It hampered commerce by making it unprofitable to carry whiskey across the mountains. To transport grain was notoriously impossible; a horse could carry only four bushels of grain, and in the form of whiskey it could carry twenty-four. Specie was already being drained from the region in payment for land and merchandise, and the excise accelerated this movement to the extent that it threatened the breakdown of all means of exchange save barter. Then what was to become of western credit and prosperity! The excise, by its demand for specie, forced out of business the small distiller who scarcely saw twenty dollars a year, but who distilled his neighbor's grain on shares and traded his own portion to the country merchant for goods. The law, conversely, was at the moment a benefit to the large distiller, for it removed the competition of the small fry and gave him control of the market. The excise, at the behest of the great landowners, had been laid by Congress as a substitute for the land tax always advocated by the West. A tax on unseated lands would have made it unprofitable to hold them and so would have forced their sale at reasonable prices, a measure that would have promoted the influx of population and enhanced the prosperity of the western country.

By now David was beyond needing approval; he faced calmly the insolent stare of Captain Thorne, and the hostile coldness of General Neville, the inspector of the excise, and even found inspiration in their opposition. There was no mistaking the sincerity in his voice; he believed heart and soul in the arguments he was presenting, and the greater

part of the audience found itself convinced, at least for the moment.

David launched into the second part of his argument, the part on which he was best prepared. The excise, he stormed, threatened the ruin of American and particularly western liberties. How? By the way in which it dragged a man off to trial to York or Philadelphia, at an expense that reduced him to paupery; by its inquisitions with legal authorization—he would not say justification—into the private homes of citizens, called the castles of the common man in the books of the law. What was it that caused the Revolution if it was not this? Were such actions from a government seated in Philadelphia any less dangerous to liberty than from one seated in London?

The excise threatened the ruin of American liberties because it was building up a salaried official class, paid by those who created it and with every incentive to do their bidding. The way was thus paved for further legal abuses, for heavier and more onerous taxes, for more legislation to promote the interests of a single class—as the payment of the national debt at face value by the federal government had already gained wealth for the speculators in certificates. All that was needed now to turn the country into an autocracy was a standing army. It was an open secret that Alexander Hamilton held that a government could not consider itself established until its power had been put to the test by a trial of its military strength, and there were those in the halls of Congress who believed that the excise had been laid purposely to excite a challenge that would furnish such a trial. Let the nation beware lest the excise be like the Trojan horse, which once introduced had been found to have an army in its belly.

David sat down amidst a storm of generous applause. The first speaker for the negative began but his effort was pallid

compared to what had gone before. The audience was still under the spell of the first speaker.

Lawyer Brackenridge, unmindful of what was being said at the moment, was carried back in memory to that day on the river bank when David Braddee had uttered his unconsciously poetic challenge to Mike Fink, and his lonely heart leaped within him at this confirmation that a kindred spirit existed in this wilderness. Let me live, he prayed, but another decade. I shall make out of this boy a poet and a statesman who will sway the nation. The people are crying for a leader such as he will be; only such a man can lead them by political means out of the trap that is being set for them by the great ones down country. The only question is, Can they wait? Will not the flames break out and consume them before the means for fighting it can be devised!

Cornelius Winegarten rose and with insolent ease knocked over the stock arguments against the excise. If it hampered western commerce the settlers had been conscious of the handicaps before they moved West; as for drainage of specie, surely a tax estimated at a dollar and a half a family was not excessive; he pointed out the absurdity of trying to enforce a law without officials. If the West feared the growth of tyranny, let it appeal to Congress, where it was well represented, and if its grievances were valid the law would be changed. As for the injustice of trial beyond the mountains, that was readily admitted, and it was well known that there was a bill pending in Congress to provide for the trial of excise cases in the state courts.

He picked up a newspaper from the table and turning to David with an insolent smile drove home his final argument like a dagger. Today's mail had brought the news that the bill had been passed and only awaited the signature of the President to make it a law. He tossed the paper contemptu-

ously into David's lap. Such an evidence of the good will of the government, he concluded, twisting the dagger, laid open to prosecution for treason anyone who assailed the measures of Congress as subversive of liberty.

The burst of applause for Cornelius Winegarten was deafening. Even the most partial were bound to admit that they had never listened to a better debate, at least in Pittsburgh. David now rose slowly to his feet.

"*Credo quia impossibile est*," he said. "I believe it because it is impossible. The arguments that I have introduced prove beyond cavil that the federal government is in danger of becoming a tyranny and the passage of one easing measure does not disprove the fact. The cowl does not make the monk."

Cornelius rejoined immediately. "You mean that the law will not be observed?"

"There is danger of that."

"That is an unwarranted slander."

"Is it?" said David coolly. "This week's *Gazette* informed us that the United States district court on May 13 had issued seventy-five processes against unregistered distillers and made them returnable to Philadelphia. If Mr. Hamilton is so tender of our welfare why did he not wait to have those processes issued under the new law?"

"That proves nothing."

"On the contrary, it proves that the government is determined to treat unregistered distillers with all the severity it can command."

"But these processes will not be served."

"Perhaps not. But until then we can believe that the motto of the Federalist court is '*Oderint dum metuant*—Let them hate provided they fear.'"

"Another slander," said Cornelius, "but let it pass. What, Citizen Democrat, would you do to remove these vaunted

threats to our liberties? Would you take up arms as in '75?"

"No," answered David, "I would resort to constitutional resistance."

"Constitutional resistance!" echoed Cornelius sarcastically. "How can there be constitutional resistance to a constitutional law? The terms are incompatible."

"I appeal to your fair-mindedness, Baron Winegarten," countered David. "By the exercise of freedom of speech and of the press in seeking the repeal of the law. There is our bulwark against tyranny, our guarantee of justice. We in this country are seeking the road that all nations and many forms of human government have sought, the road to justice, and much depends upon whether we find it. As Mr. Brackenridge has said in *Modern Chivalry*, 'If justice cannot find a residence in a democracy, then she must leave the earth.'"

There was a subdued buzz in the room as Mr. Schilling collected the penciled slips from the judges.

"A remarkable good closing thought," said a beery voice loudly. "Captain Thorne, have you read *Modern Chivalry*?"

"Why," replied the prothonotary, "I have waded through it."

"Waded through it, indeed," flashed Brackenridge, who could not have avoided hearing. "You must have been over your depth."

There was a titter from the audience and Thorne subsided darkly while Judge Wilkins rose with dignity and cleared his throat.

"I believe that even the most partial of us," he said, "will admit that this has been the hardest fought debate in the history of the Academy. Each side has delivered its arguments with honor, and Mr. Braddee is worthy of particular praise because of the way in which at a moment's notice he

acted for his absent partner. It is, therefore, a pleasure to announce that the judges' decision is in favor of the affirmative. Ladies and gentlemen, the excise has been officially abrogated in the western country, at least until the next debate."

Chapter 18

DAVID'S SUCCESS IN THE DEBATE AT THE ACADEMY WENT A long way toward improving his reputation in the town. Substantial citizens who for a year had completely ignored him or passed him with a curt nod now paused for a word. The laborers and mechanics, few of whom had attended the debate but who opposed the excise almost to a man, now accorded him a deference that was very flattering to a mere student, and occasionally one of them hinted that he might have a future in politics if he chose to seek it.

Brackenridge noted the public approval and to prevent David from thinking too highly of himself took occasion to remark caustically that the decision was of no importance—a mere makeweight to smoke. The brief, however, the lawyer went on to concede, was the best he had ever seen against the excise. That was what really counted—the honesty and ability of the work, not the opinion of the community as to its brilliance. Doubtless in good time he would win many such victories, but he must never let them go to his head. He must try to keep an accurate view of his defects as well as his virtues; otherwise pride would surely lead to a fall.

Then because he was feeling in a particularly humble mood himself, he went on to tell about how he had let his pride get out of hand during his term in the legislature and how it had doomed him to years of unpopularity and bitter self-reproach. The lesson was pointed by the lawyer's present

situation, for as he talked he sat propped up in bed by pillows and swathed by yards of white bandages.

Events had moved fast since the night of the debate.

The Braddee case was tried before Justice of the Peace Richards on Monday. The justice was a bluff gentleman of middle age who had taken turns at soldiering and merchandising before he finally settled down as medico and druggist to Pittsburgh's great unwashed. Dr. Bedford had already tomahawked a claim as physician to the élite, but that did not bother the resourceful Richards. He simply proceeded to improve his contact with the masses by getting himself appointed justice, a position in which the fees were as ample and certain as those of his medical rival. At the same time, as a regimental medical officer of the Allegheny County militia he was entitled to be addressed as major.

Behold then, Major-Doctor-Pharmacist-Justice Richards presiding with rough and ready dignity in the room that served him for office and pharmacy, taking time out once or twice to measure a few grains of ipecac or to pass out a paper of worm cure to an insistent mother. He listened with due gravity to Lawyer Woods' plea in behalf of Gurdon Thorne, then called upon Brackenridge. The latter presented the two pieces of plank as evidence and called his witnesses in turn—Big Matt, George Pancake, Lank Braddee, and David. David, dressed in his new snuff-colored suit, presented an appearance suitable to any court of law. He gave his testimony gravely and earnestly.

"There's no doubt of it, your honor," he said. "This plank was too rotten to stand even a reasonable shock. The point of the snag went through it like beans through—"

He stopped abruptly and reddened, and a titter ran around the room. Justice Richards pursed his lips, and Brackenridge hastily waved for Woods to take the witness. Try as he would, Lawyer Woods could not budge David from his

original testimony and finally abandoned the attempt. The two lawyers closed their arguments and Justice Richards picked up the exhibits and fitted the two pieces together. A portentous frown gathered on his forehead as if he were engaged in deep thought. There were other frowns in the room as well—Big Matt's frown of worried concern and Captain Thorne's frown of baffled anger. After a few moments the justice cleared his throat and looked up.

"This court once had the misfortune," he began weightily, "to place a valuable cargo on a rotten Kentucky boat, not knowing it to be such, and the boat sank and went down in seventeen feet of water, this court verily believes, by coming in contact with the head of a yellow-bellied catfish, there being no snag, rock, or other obstruction near her at the time.

"Being satisfied of the premises in this case, the court does hereby order that the same be dismissed at plaintiff's costs, to have included therein the expenses of the defendant in obtaining such damnable and irrefutable evidence as this plank has furnished."

Gurdon Thorne received the judgment in silence and paid it from a purse well filled with certificates and hard money. As he walked to the door he passed Brackenridge, who was talking to Big Matt in low tones.

"I have a most contemptible opinion of you," said the prothonotary in a voice that shook with suppressed fury.

"To be sure you have," returned Brackenridge loftily. "*You* can have no other."

Captain Thorne fairly choked with anger. "Sir," he said as soon as he could command his voice, "you shall answer for this. You shall have my challenge within the hour."

"As you choose," answered Brackenridge indifferently, "but your second may expect a cowhiding for his pains."

But an hour later when Lieutenant Reppeger appeared

in Brackenridge's outer office, the lawyer was as mild as milk. He was seated at his desk in the inner office busily writing. His coat and hat were hanging on a peg behind the door and a green eyeshade cast a sinister shadow over his dark features. David passed the officer into the inner sanctum at once, as he had been instructed to do. The lawyer glanced up as the officer entered and a flicker of saturnine amusement crossed his face.

"Well, sir?"

"I have the honor," said the lieutenant with a flourish, "to bear a message from Captain Thorne demanding satisfaction for an insult to his honor. He requests either that you direct me to someone who will act as your second or that you yourself name a convenient time and place and choose your weapons."

Brackenridge had scarcely lifted his pen from the paper and now he turned back to his writing.

"Tell Captain Thorne," he said contemptuously over his shoulder, "that my answer shall presently appear for all the world to see."

The quill began scratching rapidly over the paper. The lieutenant was nonplussed. It was plainly to be seen that the lawyer was no gentleman, else he would have had some knowledge of the code of honor.

"But, sir—"

"You have my answer, sir," said Brackenridge sternly, without looking up or pausing in his writing.

The officer gave a baffled shrug and strode out past the grinning clerk in the outer office. A few minutes later the lawyer rose and put on his coat and hat. He folded the paper on which he had been writing and thrust it into his pocket as he paused by David's desk.

"If I'm needed I'm to be found at Mr. Scull's," he said, and went out.

The next two days were a time of excited anticipation in Pittsburgh. Certain individuals found amusement in carrying from each camp to the other what news they could gather. It was well known that Captain Thorne was roaring like a chained lion and teetering between the courses of posting Brackenridge as a coward or giving him a horse-whipping. The lawyer, on the other hand, was perfectly calm and without misapprehension so far as his demeanor showed, though he was elaborately sarcastic about his fears of personal injury. A circumstantial rumor that the next issue of the *Gazette* would end the suspense finally gained credence and the town settled down with pleased expectancy to await its publication on Wednesday.

Mr. Scull was a young man of unparalleled punctuality and industry, and the mere fact that the *Gazette* had not been struck off at midnight Tuesday did not prevent the citizens of Pittsburgh from besieging his door before five o'clock the next morning. Sure enough, a neat pile of freshly printed *Gazettes* was ready for distribution and copies were rushed off immediately to both parties concerned and to all the subscribing townsmen.

The Brackenridges were still abed when black Sally knocked on the door and announced that the paper had come. Mrs. Brackenridge sat up in bed, bright-eyed with anticipation, and punched her dormant husband's ribs.

"Now I can find out what it's all about," she cried. "Hurry up and get the paper, Hugh."

Baby Cornelia, who had been awakened by Sally's knock, whimpered in her crib and Sabina leaned over to quiet her. Brackenridge slowly turned back the covers and got out of bed, disclosing a comically abbreviated night robe with vertical blue stripes. His peaked nightcap was made of the same cloth, but Sabina had sportively cut it so that the stripes were horizontal. The lawyer ambled to the door and

picked up the paper, then fished around the top of the chest of drawers for his glasses.

"Oh, come on, Hugh," said his wife impatiently. "You know you don't need your spectacles."

"What!" he grumbled amiably. "Not use my specs! Why, I bought them for important occasions like this. Treason, madame, treason!"

Sabina floundered over the coverlets and snatched the paper from his hand.

"Let me read it," she cried. "Where is it? The French Treaty—Letters Left at the Post Office—A Moral Anecdote." She made a wry face and turned the page. "Oh, here it is! An Answer to a Challenge to a Duel."

"Read it aloud," said Brackenridge. "Let's hear how it sounds."

Sabina folded the paper and read rapidly:

"I have two objections to this duel matter—the one is, lest I should hurt you; the other is, lest you should hurt me. I don't see any good it would be to me, to put a ball through your body; I could make no use of you when dead, for any culinary purpose, as I would a rabbit or turkey, since I am no cannibal to feed upon the flesh of men. A buffalo would make better meat; for, though your flesh might be delicate and tender, yet it wants the firmness and consistency which take and retain salt, so that it would not do for a long sea voyage. You might make a good barbecue, it is true, being the nature of a raccoon or opossum, but people are not now in the habit of barbecuing anything that is human. And as to your hide, it is not worth taking off, being little better than a two-year-old colt! So much for you.

"As to myself, I do not like to stand in the way of anything that is hurtful, since I am under the impression that you, having been a military man and accustomed to the use of fire arms, might hit me. This being the case I think it

most advisable to stay in the distance. If you mean to try your pistol, take some object, a tree, or a barn door about my dimensions; if you hit that, send me word, and I will acknowledge that if I had been in the same place, you might also have hit me."

David, in his attic room above the Brackenridge's bedroom, had been up for some time parsing verbs from Horace's *Odes*. His table was directly by an open window overlooking the street so that he was presently conscious of a murmur of voices that rapidly approached the Brackenridge residence. He thrust his head out the window and saw what looked to be a small mob streaming toward the house from the direction of the Monongahela. In front of the mob strode a tall thin figure that he instantly recognized as Gurdon Thorne. The prothonotary was walking rapidly and at every step he struck his right boot with the stock of a vicious looking whip. Once he lashed out savagely at a hound that strolled across his bow, and the beast ran yelping to its refuge under a coal shed.

Thorne stopped in front of the Brackenridge house and the crowd stood around behind him at a respectful distance. It was apparent to David by now that the crowd had no belligerent intentions but had simply come along to see the fun.

Thorne made half a dozen quick steps to the front door and thundered upon it with the butt of his whip. Before Sally could reach the front of the house he pounded again. The whip stock was well weighted with lead and in the calm of early morning the racket was loud enough to waken the neighbors for a block around.

David heard Brackenridge's bedroom window slide up. A nightcap with ludicrous horizontal stripes was thrust out, followed by shoulders clad in contrariwise stripes.

Thorne glared up at the lawyer, who was rubbing his eyes with his right fist in an elaborate show of indifference.

"Come down, damn you," shouted Thorne. "Come down and I'll give you the worst horsewhipping a rascal ever had."

The lawyer slowly put on his spectacles and peered down at the prothonotary for a moment. He shook his head owl-ishly.

"No, thanks!" he said. "I wouldn't come down for two such favors."

There was a mighty shout of laughter from the crowd and under cover of the noise Brackenridge slowly retreated into the room and closed the window.

Chapter 19

THERE WAS MUCH MERRIMENT AT GURDON THORNE'S expense that morning over Pittsburgh's breakfast tables. Thorne remained alone in his office, drinking and lashing himself into new furies. All those who had business with him found occasion to put it off and even Lieutenant Repperger, who came to hold a council of war, damned him to his face and threatened to go to Brackenridge and apologize for having acted as second for such an unmitigated boor.

The result was that the brunt of Thorne's savage humor fell upon his wife. At first she had attempted to keep out of his way by pretending to help Buttercup with the kitchen work, but his angry shouts called her before long to the front room. Lieutenant Repperger had just left and Thorne felt the need of venting his anger on some less resistant object. When she appeared he rolled his eyes in what might have been either a leer or a glare.

"Why aren't you here? Don't you know a wife's duty is to her husband?"

The girl's lips were stiff with fright but she managed to stammer a "Yes."

"Stop staring at me that way," shouted Thorne. "I won't hurt you. I only want someone to talk to. Sit down."

"Yes, Gurdon." She sank into the great brocaded chair with the flaring wings.

"That's better."

Thorne picked up his glass and took a swallow of whiskey. He made a wry face.

"Damnable stuff," he said. "Don't know why I drink it. Warms me up." He took another swallow. "Used to drink wine," he said. "Palate gone now. Completely gone." He shook the glass with a circular motion and watched the whiskey splash against the sides. "Damnable stuff," he repeated moodily and drained the glass. He studied the toes of his boots for a moment, then suddenly shouted:

"Take my boots off."

Starr rose hastily. "I'll get a jack—" she began.

"No, no. Now. Come here."

Starr stood in front of him obediently.

"Turn around."

As she turned he suddenly thrust one foot under her skirt and between her knees.

"Pull it off," he commanded.

Starr grasped the boot and pulled while Thorne pushed with the other foot. The boot came away and she staggered toward the bookcase that held the prothonotary's records. Thorne gave vent to a savage guffaw and held up the other boot. This time, Thorne, amused at his own cleverness, pushed her so hard that she was hurled against the bookcase and bruised her shoulder painfully. She sat down in the great chair rubbing her shoulder and striving to hold back the tears. Thorne, still laughing at his whimsy, crossed unsteadily to her and seized the injured shoulder. The girl winced and cringed, and the man thrust her violently back in the seat.

"Faugh," he said, sinking into his chair, "you milk sop, you're afraid. You disgust me."

He poured another drink and swallowed it hastily.

"Why did I ever marry you?" he growled, looking at her with bleary-eyed disfavor. "God knows you're nothin' to look at—skinny and yellow-skinned and with hair like tow. Always cryin' or fixin' to cry."

He gulped another glass and resumed his monologue. "To think I could have had my pick of beauties, and I married you. A tavern wench. That's what you were, and that's what you always will be. A tavern wench. A man in my posish-posishun needs a real wife. Shumbody the men admire. Makes good bishness havin' beautiful wife. Maksh other women jealous. I could've had any girl in Balt'more an' I married you. I—Captain Gurdon Thorne married a tavern wench."

"You didn't have to marry me," said a strange, intense voice from Starr's chair. Thorne goggled at her in astonishment and Starr suddenly realized that the voice had been hers. The remembrance of the sound seemed to give her courage and she waited his next words with a touch of belligerence, but they nevertheless took her by surprise. He leered at her with a revolting companionableness.

"Coursh I didn't have t' marry you. You'd have come t' me anyhow." He leaned over and tried to tap her knee but succeeded only in pawing the air. "Want t' know shum-thing? I didn' marry you." He stopped suddenly and seemed to search her face craftily, then added hastily, "It wash your shister—your shi-shishter."

He groped uncertainly for his glass and gravely turned it upside down to see if any liquor remained, then poured it half full from the bottle. He raised the glass and nodded to Starr as if he were toasting her and gulped down half of the whiskey. He set the glass down carefully on the table.

"You know," he said amiably, "we could get along 'f only you'd do your share. Why don't you vish-vishit with t'other ladiesh now? Go out an' be one o' the girls. Shpin, shew on baby clesh—. Might throw a little bishness my way—buy a pretty ribbon for your hair. Why not?"

"I have my housework to do," answered Starr quietly.

"Nonshensh! Ought to get out with the girls. No

babies." He seemed to think that over for a moment. "Why no babies? Huh?"

"I don't know," said Starr, seeing that she was expected to make an answer.

"You think I'm no good, huh? Well, I got four brats 'n Anne 'Rundel County—black 's the ace of shpades." He seemed to be working himself up toward another rage. "I can do it again, too. Theresh Buttercup, now. How'd you like a little black sht—shstep-shon out of her? Wouldn't like it, huh? Well, I'll do what I pleash an' you'll like it."

He rose unsteadily to his feet and leaned over her, challenging her to defy him. He spoke with such explosive force that the saliva sprayed on her face.

"I'll do what I pleash," he said, "an' *you'll* do what I pleash. I sheen you making calf's eyes at that Braddee cock'rel. Maybe you think you c'd get a brat by him. Well, let me tell you shumthing, my fine tavern wench; let me so much as see you shpeak to him and I'll kill you both. So help me God, I'll kill you both."

His eyes were burning down through a vast distance into hers and his fetid breath closed her in like something solid. It seemed to be choking her, forcing her down and down into a bottomless pit of horrible darkness. Suddenly the muscles of her throat gave way and as she gasped for air she realized that unconsciously she had been holding her breath. Before he could stop her she had slipped under his arm and was free. He straightened up uncertainly, but in that moment she acted. Swiftly she stooped and drew off one of her delicate brocade slippers and brought its pointed heel down upon the man's head. He swayed and half turned, then without a sound crumpled to the floor.

Starr's first impulse was to flee from the house, but she quickly suppressed it. It was more important to know whether she had killed him or merely injured him. She

stooped and thrust her hand into his waistcoat before she noticed that his chest was rising and falling regularly. Probably her blow had done no more than push him over the borderline into the unconsciousness that would soon have claimed him anyway. She kicked off her other slipper and lifted his head and shoulders. Fortunately he was not a heavy man, so she soon had him sitting in his chair with his head and arms on the table. When he revived the chances were better than even that he would think he had fallen asleep in that position.

Starr then put on her slippers, took her bonnet from the closet, and opened the front door. She forced herself to descend the stoop slowly and to walk with dignified calm along Front Street.

John Woods was alone when she entered his office, and he rose and gave her the courtly bow that had made him a favorite with the ladies of Pittsburgh.

"Mrs. Thorne," he said, "this is indeed a pleasure."

Starr wasted no time on preliminaries. "I want you to find some way for me to get away from that man," she said.

"What? Who—what man?"

"My husband."

"Oh, I see." Lawyer Woods looked down into Starr's violet eyes. They are beautiful, he thought; the innocence of a child and the wisdom of the ages in them. How in the world Gurdon Thorne ever— He came back to the business in hand.

"Suppose you tell me your story," he said, "so I can judge better what can be done."

Starr told briefly of the mental cruelty to which her husband had subjected her ever since their marriage, of his increasing fondness for liquor, and finally of such parts as she chose of the episode that had just occurred. In spite of

Brackenridge's dislike for him, John Woods was a well-intentioned gentleman with no more foibles or vices than the average and perhaps more than his share of the milk of human kindness. He was touched by Starr's recital, but when she had finished he shook his head.

"Much as I sympathize with you, Mrs. Thorne," he said, "I am afraid that there are no grounds here for action. So far as you know he has not been—well, unfaithful to you, has he?"

Starr shook her head. "No—not that I know of."

"The law," said the lawyer with a touch of pontificality, "allows no redress in cases such as this."

With the loftiness of a man living in a century that was designed to cater to the caprices of men, he told her that thousands of women in Pennsylvania put up with more from their husbands than this. After all, she had suffered, there was no doubt of that, and though he wanted to make circumstances as easy for her as he could, there was little he could do.

Starr was speaking again. "There are times when I feel that he not only despises me but hates me. I felt it today, as though there was something he held against me—something I had done or was to blame for."

"Do you have any idea what it could be?"

"Not the slightest."

"Perhaps," said the lawyer, "he feels that he has an obligation toward you. Hatred is often founded on such a principle. Did he receive any of his property from you?"

"Yes. There was an inheritance from my uncle."

"Why did you marry him?"

"My aunt arranged the marriage without my knowledge—and I was ready to do anything to get away from her."

"Hm-m." The lawyer looked at Starr with renewed interest. If he was any judge of character he knew now why

Gurdon Thorne had hitched himself for life to a pale, timid little country girl. A hundred questions were forming in his mind, but apparently he decided to put them aside for the present.

"What am I to do? I can't go back there."

"Suppose," he said, "that you stay with us for a few days until the trouble blows over. Mrs. Woods can easily spare you a room. No—she's leaving for Federal Springs tomorrow." He paused a moment in thought. "There's an idea," he said suddenly. "How would you like to go to Federal Springs for the rest cure? Mrs. Woods would be delighted to have you accompany her."

Starr's eyes glowed at the prospect of leaving Pittsburgh for the first time in almost two years.

"I'd love it," she cried. Then her face fell. "Only—"

"Your husband," said the lawyer. "I'll take care of him. You go on to Federal Springs and have a good time."

Gurdon Thorne awoke late in the afternoon and, as Starr had surmised, took it for granted that he had fallen asleep at the table. He drained the last of the whiskey to clear his head and relieve his throat and struggled into his boots. In the kitchen he plunged his head into a bucket of water several times and then, refreshed, mopped himself with a coarse towel. Buttercup was standing by the kitchen table paring potatoes and he noted with approval the clean lines of her body clad in a cotton garment modeled with more taste than was common among slave women. He went back to his office and picked up his hat and his loaded whip. His mind was made up. He was going to thrash Brackenridge if he had to drag the lawyer out of his own home.

But luck was with him this time and against the wily lawyer. Brackenridge was seated on a grassy spot on the bank of the Monongahela when Thorne came upon him.

There was no time for the victim to defend himself. The loaded whip descended with deadly force and swiftness upon his head and shoulders and he might very well have had his skull crushed in had he not been wearing a heavy wool hat. As it was, he received three or four blows before he managed to grapple with his assailant. The two men rolled over and over down the steep bank, but before the combat could be renewed at the bottom several spectators had leaped down and separated them. Brackenridge departed to see Dr. Richards and then took to his bed, where he remained for several days, too done up to resent his beating.

When Thorne reached his home he found John Woods waiting for him. He threw his crop triumphantly on the table.

"At last I'm even with Old Hughie," he said.

"You mean you thrashed him?"

"Beat him to a pulp."

The lawyer shook his head slowly. "You haven't heard the end of this."

"Who cares!" laughed Thorne harshly. "Let's have a drink." He shook the empty whiskey bottle, then set it down and strode to the living room door.

"Starr," he called, "bring us another bottle."

"She'll not answer," said John Woods slowly. "She's left you."

Thorne stared. "Left me? Man, you're not serious."

"Left you at least until you get over this drunk," said the lawyer. "She and Mrs. Woods are going to Federal Springs tomorrow."

Thorne shut his teeth with a snap. "Then she can stay at Federal Springs," he said viciously. "She won't need to come back."

Lawyer Woods looked him in the eyes. "Thorne," he said,

"you don't mean that. There's something wrong here—something very wrong. If you don't take her back and treat her as a wife should be treated, then by the Eternal I'll go back East and find out what it is if it's the last thing I do on earth."

Gurdon Thorne swallowed and blinked. Too much whiskey had unmanned his nerves, he thought to himself as John Woods walked out. Two years ago John Woods or no other man could have talked to him like that. Two years ago he would have settled with that pettifogger Brackenridge before the sun had gone down instead of waiting around for three days for some fool to publish a newspaper.

Well, there was no cure for whiskey like whiskey. He started for the cellar by way of the kitchen. Buttercup was standing in the kitchen door and the rays of the sun descending over Coal Hill silhouetted her figure through her one scanty garment. The man stopped and stared, fascinated. This was something like. Here was a promise that sent the blood pounding through his veins, the promise of an unashamed vitality that would rush to explore with him the pleasures that he had half forgotten since coming to this cursed western country. Fascinated as much by those memories as by what he saw now, he stood and gloated over each line of the dark figure and imagined it pressed close to his white body as many had been before.

Buttercup turned slowly in the doorway and saw him devouring her with his eyes. She tossed her head in a pert gesture and showed her even white teeth in a smile that told him it was no accident that he had found her between him and the sun. Unhurriedly, as if reluctant to shut off its revealing rays, she closed the door on the sinking sun.

Chapter 20

FOR A PERIOD OF TWO OR THREE DAYS LAWYER BRACKEN-ridge ran a temperature that kept him confined to his bed. By Saturday he was up and about, pursuing his business with his usual nervous energy. His main business in life, he swore, was to prosecute Gurdon Thorne to the full extent of the law, and the prothonotary soon had the wry pleasure of filing a precipe against himself and of issuing a writ calling upon himself to satisfy the claim or appear in court to defend the action.

All this activity was viewed with dismay by Dr. Richards, who had strictly enjoined his patient from overexertion. The good medico, thereupon, took Sabina Brackenridge aside and made a suggestion that she received with shining eyes. Sabina was a past mistress in the art of planning and prosecuting campaigns, and it was not yet Sunday noon before the harassed lawyer yielded.

"A total stranger," he remarked with dry humor, "would think you glad that your husband had been in peril of his life so that you could take the rest cure with him at Federal Springs."

Sabina kissed her husband's leathery cheek. "I have another for Captain Thorne in thanks for putting us in the way of a vacation," she said saucily, and went off to pack.

During the next week David ran the law office alone, and then Mr. Brackenridge was back home again without Sabina and the children—as she had foreseen and as the lawyer had known she had foreseen.

Brackenridge threw himself into clearing up his back

business and for the next month he scarcely had time to miss his wife. There were the preliminaries of his suit against Gurdon Thorne to be got out of the way and in addition a number of conferences on political affairs, for he had finally decided to make the race for Congress. Try as he might, however, he found himself falling behind, particularly on his debt collections. In those days, because of the lack of a bank in Pittsburgh, debts owed to eastern merchants and land owners were collected by western lawyers, and Brackenridge, with a reputation for ability and scrupulous honesty, had gathered a lucrative portion of this business into his hands. During the month after his affair with Gurdon Thorne, Brackenridge made two trips into the country and was confronted by the necessity of making two more before the eastern mail left on July 18. In this dilemma he bethought himself of sending David southwest into Washington County with letters to the parties involved, while he himself went east into Westmoreland County.

The night before he was to leave, David was sitting in the outer office reading a volume of Voltaire when Brackenridge came in.

"David," said the lawyer, "do you remember your fears the night of the debate concerning those processes that Hamilton had taken out under the old law?"

"Yes."

"Well, the sheep's skin has been pulled from the wolf and we know him for what he is. The federal marshal is here now serving those very processes returnable to Philadelphia. I met him only a few minutes ago, a Mr. Lenox. He has served all but four or five of those taken out for this region and confesses that he had expected any moment to be set upon. Of course I expressed surprise that he should think us so lawless, but I own my own surprise that the people have taken it as calmly as they have."

"Perhaps nothing will come of it."

"Suppose the men served refuse to go to Philadelphia for trial. Suppose when the sheriff comes to take them that their neighbors rally to their support. The next step then must be the calling out of the militia, and from that very act we may have a rebellion on our hands. Your western farmer is no more likely to brook unreasonable laws now than he was in '75."

At daybreak the next morning David left Pittsburgh by Henderson's Ferry, riding a pudgy bay mare that Brackenridge had hired for the purpose. David led the mare up the road that wound around the side of the deep hollow in Coal Hill opposite Pittsburgh and paused at the top to look back. In the angle formed by the Monongahela and Allegheny rivers lay Pittsburgh, so far below that its dusty streets and squalid cabins and cottages took on the enchantment of a toy village. At that distance it was difficult to distinguish any certain house; only the mounded ruins of Fort Pitt at the Point and the stockade of Fort Fayette farther up the Allegheny stood out. Marie's Tavern on Grant's Hill nestled in its carefully trimmed surroundings and below it was Mother Pearson's shebang.

He had come a long way, thought David, since that last night at Mother Pearson's. He remembered with distaste the disorder in Arcola's room and the pungent odor of slops, and then was suddenly conscious that he had a distaste for other things as well. Such as offal-strewn mud streets, rickety unpainted cabins, neglected, weedy yards, and odorous human beings. He had heard that in some cities the streets were cleaned regularly and the houses and yards were carefully kept. Philadelphia, it was said, was like that. Then and there David resolved to see Philadelphia some day. If he liked it well enough, he might even settle there. At any rate it ought to be better than these squalid

towns in the western country. It was the first time he remembered having noticed his surroundings with any particular degree of emotion.

Perhaps that was another of the things education did for a fellow. The more he ate the hungrier he became. A little over a year ago he had been content with the world and with his portion in it. Now he was always longing for something more, never satisfied with what he had or what he saw. He was reminded of the days when as a lad he had roamed the hills along Chartiers Creek and had always been eager to see what was just beyond the next hill. It was the same now, save that the hills beyond which he was always peering were the heights of knowledge, and the country at which he gazed was the delectable country of the mind.

The rattling of stones and the clumping of horse's feet drew closer on the road below and presently a man appeared around a thicket leading a big gray horse. The man's huge head, craggy brows, and blue-black jaws were sights that, once seen, were never forgotten, and David recognized him immediately as Daniel Strong, the Methody minister. The minister raised his eyes and saw David standing with his mare's reins over his arm.

"Howdy, stranger," he said, stopping to breathe the horse. "A fine summer morning."

"Good harvesting weather," said David.

"Yes, the farmers are out in their fields all the way to the mountains."

"You came from the East?"

"At this time yesterday," said the minister, "I was in Laughlintown."

"Hm-m, over fifty miles. You travel fast on that nag."

"I have to. My first appointment is in West Liberty, Vir-

ginia, tonight. Well, I must be on my way. Time and tide wait for no man. Are you going my direction?"

"Only as far as Couch's Fort."

"Good. If it's all the same to you, we'll ride together. My name's Daniel Strong and my occupation is serving the Lord as a Methodist preacher."

"I'm David Braddee."

"Any relation to the scout, Samuel Brady?"

"No. We spell our names differently."

"You're a clerk or a schoolmaster, if I read your dress a-right."

"You're partly right," said David. "I am clerk to Lawyer Brackenridge and a student in Pittsburgh Academy."

The two men mounted their horses and turned away from the river. In front of them was a narrow valley sloping toward the southwest and the welter of hills and forest that stretched away to the horizon. As they jogged along the narrow roadway David found himself stealing glances at his companion, for the minister's huge physique and peculiar countenance fascinated him. He recalled the scene on the river bank when this man had prayed before the Methodist immigrants had pushed off their boats and the unexpected sweetness of his powerful voice raising the hymn as they had drifted away. He had had a peculiar sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach, David recalled, and he didn't know whether it had been caused by the minister's prayer.

"Just fourteen months ago," said Daniel Strong, "I led a flotilla of immigrants downstream from Pittsburgh."

"I remember it," said David. "I have often wondered where you settled."

"Not far from Cincinnati, in the Symmes Purchase. The Lord blessed us with a good tract of ground—a natural meadow, it was, so that all we had to do was sink our

plows into the earth. In spite of our late start, the corn grew higher than my head—and I am no pigmy.”

“So I notice,” said David dryly, then laughed.

The minister joined in the laugh. “In all my travels,” he said, “I have never seen a bigger man than me—at least in body—but once, and I never received a thrashing in my life, though I came awful close to it that once. It was in my unregenerate days and I was living in Virginia on the Pigg River, where my parents had moved from Pennsylvania when I was a lad. I was a terrific battler and by the time I was eighteen I had whipped every man from our neighborhood that would stand up to me either in fair fight or rough-and-tumble. After that, so much did I hanker for combat that whenever I would hear of a champion I would hunt him up and pick a fight with him. In this way within a couple of years I had whipped so many men that I was reckoned to be the bully of Virginia from Lynchburg to the Forks of the New.

“Well, then I heard of a certain Ab Weatherly over in North Carolina on the Yadkin who claimed to be the bully of North Carolina and I couldn’t rest until I had taken a fall out of him. So I saddled my pony—not as big a horse as this I admit—and set out.

“Two or three days later I found Ab Weatherly’s house, a log cabin set in the middle of a yard enclosed by a stake and rider fence about four feet high. I rode up to the fence feeling mighty cock-a-hoop and hollered. Pretty soon a man came out of the cabin, but such a man. He must have been every inch of seven feet. My eyes nearly started out of my head but I’d come for a fight and I aimed to go through with it.

“‘Are you Ab Weatherly?’ I says.

“‘Reckon that’s what they call me, stranger,’ he says.

“‘The bully of North Carolina?’

"Well, they do say that around these parts."

"Well," I says, "I'm Dan Strong, the bully of Virginia, and I've come to give you a thrashing."

"Well, now, that's right neighborly of you, Dan," he says, "but first let's go in and have some dinner. I was just about to set down when you hollered."

"Well, I was rather sharp set so I agreed and started looking around for the gate. He noticed me looking."

"Never mind the gate, Dan," he says. "Just hop over the fence."

"But the horse—" I began, when he cut me short.

"Oh, I'll take care of the horse."

"With that he reached over and put his arms around the pony's barrel and lifted it over the fence before you could say 'Lord Cornwallis.' Well, I looked at him a minute, all kerflummixed, then I says:

"Mr. Weatherly, if it's all the same to you, will you hand me back my horse and I'll be on my way? So far as I'm concerned I'm now looking at the man who is the bully of both North Carolina and Virginia."

When David's burst of hilarity had passed, the minister went on: "As a matter of fact, I stayed to dinner and we became fast friends. Later on, after I had been converted and started preaching, Ab Weatherly was the first person I admitted to full connection. Seven years ago when I visited him at the same cabin he gave me this gray, but he didn't hand it over the fence to me."

They splashed through the muddy waters of Sawmill Run and started up a narrow, gloomy defile over which the trees hung so thickly that they could scarcely see the sky. The minister looked above him at the interlacing foliage.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow

of death," he said, "I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

By the time, half an hour later, that they reached the head of the valley into which the defile had broadened, Daniel Strong had quoted several psalms and the Sermon on the Mount in a voice whose feelings and mellifluousness were in strange contrast to his rough-hewn appearance. David listened, fascinated, for the minister seemed to open up the dark sayings of the Scripture by his very intonations, and it was only grudgingly that he consented to take his turn by reciting some stanzas from Gray's *Elegy*.

"They are beautiful, melancholy lines," said the minister when David had stopped, "but no message of hope for eternity, no triumph of the soul. In this life we are bound to ineffectualness by our fleshly robes, but in the after life with loosened tongues and unfettered minds we shall take our places in heaven beside the Hampdens and the Miltons. Now we are like explorers laboring from one hill to another to see what is beyond; yet no matter how long we search or how diligently we study we shall know here only in part. 'For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.'"

Here is a new concept, thought David as they rode, that in the after life we shall understand perfectly. Brackenridge, he recalled, had once asserted that life beyond death could offer nothing sweeter than the privilege of continuing to seek without ever finding. And as David listened he found other differences between the minister and the lawyer. Brackenridge sought to speak with tolerant skepticism but Daniel Strong gave the impression of knowing whereof he spoke. He quoted Scripture with an air of finality that the lawyer would not knowingly have adopted in reciting the multiplication table. But in spite of his positiveness the

minister had a way of drawing one out gently but insistently, and before long David found himself disclosing more of his life, his ambitions, and his beliefs than he had ever done before to a stranger, save on that one memorable night when he had gone to consult Lawyer Brackenridge.

Then, far too soon, they were at the parting of the ways. The big man stopped his horse and looked with brooding eyes at his young companion.

"David," he said, "have you ever considered the way of the Lord?" Then at David's puzzled expression he amended, "Have you thought of giving your heart to God?"

"I don't rightly understand," said David, yet deep in his heart he did understand. He felt coming over him that old gone feeling in the pit of the stomach that had afflicted him on the day of his return to Pittsburgh over a year ago. Even whiskey, he remembered, had failed to cure it. Then he heard the preacher's voice:

"Kneel with me here under this tree, David."

David dismounted numbly and knelt while the minister poured out a fervid prayer couched in a jargon that was only half intelligible, yet whose burden was unmistakable. Then they were on their horses again.

"David," the minister was saying, "I want you to take my pocket Bible as an earnest of what God will do for you if you will only let him. I can get another one in Louisville, or if I can't I already know large portions of it by heart. I am going to Kentucky for a year or so and then to the Illinois country or perhaps to the Spanish territory beyond. They say that many Americans are settling there and in danger of being taken in by Popish heresies. God willing, I shall be back here in Pittsburgh in two or three years and I shall require an accounting of how you have used my

Bible. Read it when you are weary or discouraged or when men mistreat and despise you."

He turned his horse to the western fork of the road, then grasped David's hand.

"Remember, David," he said, "I have marked you for God. Back there on Coal Hill I coveted you for the Kingdom, and the Lord has given me his promise that in his own good time he will reach down and claim you."

Chapter 21

TWICE DURING THE DAY DAVID STOPPED TO DELIVER MESSAGES. The first man he located was in the harvest field, but after some grumbling he went to the house and wrote out an order on a Pittsburgh merchant. The order might prove to be good or it might not, but David took it and rode on. Beyond Couch's Fort, a rickety log structure in a large meadow, he turned southeast and several miles farther on delivered a message to a miller on Peter's Creek. The man had made the mistake of registering his still with General Neville's agent and in consequence had had his still "mended" and part of his milling machinery destroyed. He read Brackenridge's message and invited David to stay to dinner while he busied himself in setting down his excuses in a lengthy letter.

An hour after noon David was back on the hot and dusty road again, headed for Parkinson's Ferry on the Monongahela. He arrived between two and three o'clock at the Mingo Creek Presbyterian Church, well within Washington County, and stopped at the near-by spring for a drink. The church was a rather large log structure perched on the hillside above the creek and overlooking a narrow meadow. In the shade of an oak grove near the church a militia officer was seated at a table mopping his brow and absent-mindedly listening to the appeals of militiamen to be excused from service. There was a sudden shout from the direction of the highway and a man appeared running across the meadow toward the church. The somnolent little knot of men stirred to attention, for no one but a fool would

run in such weather unless he bore important news. The man trotted up to the table, panting for breath and streaming sweat.

"The federal sheriff," he gasped. "The federal sheriff is taking away people to Philadelphia."

"Taking them away?" said the officer sharply. "What do you mean?"

The runner sank on a bench and waved a hand apologetically. Someone brought him a gourd of spring water and he drank greedily.

"He's out with General Neville," said the man finally, "serving processes returnable to Philadelphia."

"So that's what that damned reprobate Hamilton is up to," said the officer. "Serving processes under the old law. How many processes are there?"

"Don't know," said the man. "They tried to serve one on William Miller about noon when a bunch of us came running in from the harvest field. Someone fired a shot and Neville and the sheriff rode off damning us for a passel of rebels."

"Where did they go?"

"Neville's house at Bower Hill, I reckon. Maybe to Pittsburgh."

The officer sat for a moment in deep thought, then spoke decisively.

"We've got to get word of this to the Democratic Society. The business of the day is off. All of you clear out and tell your neighbors to meet here at once. The time for action has come."

The group scattered, some on foot over the neighboring hills and others by horse to the road. David, who followed in a more leisurely fashion, was for a few minutes almost choked by the dust of the departure. He rode south past the little falls of Mingo Creek and turned off the road to

see a Mr. McKibben. He found the man all shirted and accoutred, ready to depart for the church. Brackenridge's business, Mr. McKibben allowed, could wait. Maybe in a few days all debts would be outlawed anyhow. David persisted, however, and in the end received an order on Benjamin Parkinson for nine pounds odd.

That night at Parkinson's Ferry, David put up at the combination store, ferry-house, tavern, and real estate office of Joseph Parkinson, who fancied his establishment as the nucleus of a town. Joseph, it developed, along with all the other men in the neighborhood, had gone to Mingo to the meeting, and David was prone to believe it for he had passed no less than a score of riflemen on the highway. After supper David borrowed a skiff and rowed across the Monongahela to see a farmer named Devore, and it was long after dark when he returned. About midnight Joseph Parkinson rode in from Mingo Church with the information that forty men under John Holcroft had gone to Bower Hill to seize the marshal and bring him to the meeting house. Another party had been sent to Coal Hill to cut off communication with Pittsburgh and to intercept the marshal if he attempted to escape.

Early the next morning David was on the road retracing his course to the Mingo meeting house, where Joseph Parkinson had assured him he would find Benjamin Parkinson, probably sleeping on a church bench, since he had to be on hand to direct the activities of the society of which he was president.

On the road near the meeting house David was accosted by an uncouth fellow in a hunting shirt who barred his passage with a six-foot rifle.

"What's yore business, stranger?" said the man.

"I want to see Benjamin Parkinson."

"Whar ye from?"

"Pittsburgh."

"Go on about yore business. We don't want no city galoots hornin' in here."

"But I must see Mr. Parkinson on business for Mr. Brackenridge."

"Oh, fur Mr. Brackenridge. Why didn't ye say so before ye spoke?"

Benjamin Parkinson, just as his brother had guessed, was lying on a church bench wrapped in a blanket. Other brown cocoons scattered about the building gave snoring testimony to the activity that must have pervaded the vicinity most of the night. Parkinson was a tall, red-headed man with a freckled countenance that bore a look of hard-boiled good humor. He endorsed McKibben's demand readily enough, but demurred at finding two hundred pounds to satisfy his own debt. Finally, after some cogitation and considerable casting up of sums, he wrote a demand on John Canon of Canonsburg for half the amount and gave it to David.

A few miles north of Mingo, at Finley's cross roads, David dismounted at the tavern and called for breakfast. He was chewing on a particularly tough cut of ham when a cavalcade clattered into the yard and dismounted.

"It's John Holcroft back from Bower Hill," said the landlord peering from the window.

The door swung open and a dozen men strode into the taproom.

"Did ye get him, John?" said the landlord to the reckless looking man who seemed to be the leader. David looked at him with interest, for he was the reputed author of the Tom the Tinker notes.

"Hell, no," spat Holcroft. "Rustle us up something to eat and drink, will you, Shamus? We're famished."

"But what happened?"

"Plenty. We surrounded the mansion house at dawn but

before we had a chance to do anything Neville and the federal sheriff commenced firing and killed Oliver Miller. We might have rushed the door but the general has a swivel gun loaded with musket balls in the hallway, so it wasn't worth the risk. We fired a few shots in the windows but before we could really get down to target practice, a signal horn blew in the house and the damned niggers in the cabins fired into our rear and winged seven of us. After that we legged it for our horses and came away."

"Too bad about Oliver," said the landlord, setting out an array of cold meats, corn bread, and whiskey.

"We'll get it back on them yet," said Holcroft confidently, attacking the viands.

David paid his score and left the tavern. Shortly after noon he entered Canonsburg and stopped at the Black Horse Tavern to bait the mare and inquire the way to Colonel Canon's house.

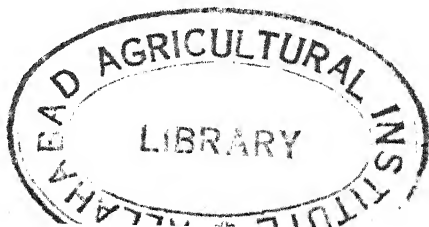
"Why," said the landlord, "Colonel Canon is in the grape arbor with some other gentlemen. Go right on out back."

There were three men sitting in the arbor smoking when David walked in and asked which was Colonel Canon. One of them, an elderly gentleman in good blue broadcloth, said that he pled guilty.

"I am David Braddee, Mr. Brackenridge's clerk," said David. "I have some business with you on behalf of Mr. Benjamin Parkinson, whom I left this morning."

"This morning!" exclaimed one of the others, a ruddy, bold-faced man in the middle thirties who was dressed with an expensiveness that bordered on ostentation. "What is the news from John Holcroft?"

"Why, haven't you heard?" said David. "General Neville and his negroes caught Holcroft's party between two fires and they retreated. Oliver Miller was killed and seven others wounded."



"God save us!" cried the young man, but his face lit up with ill-concealed satisfaction. "That means war. The die has been cast for us."

The third man shook his head gloomily. "I am afraid so, Mr. Bradford," he said. "If only Parkinson hadn't sent that party to Bower Hill."

"That's water under the bridge, now," said Bradford, a little impatiently. He turned to David. "What is Parkinson going to do about it?"

"I don't know," answered David. "I only heard the news when I saw Holcroft at Finley's."

"I wonder why Parkinson doesn't get in touch with us?" said Bradford.

"Perhaps he has written you at Washington," suggested Colonel Canon.

Bradford rose and paced the arbor impatiently. David thought that he had never seen a handsomer or more graceful man. It was no wonder that he had already won wealth and political power and a place as state's attorney for Washington County. He was also the vice president and real leader of the Washington Democratic Society, a fact that David took to explain his presence in Canonsburg. David saw that Colonel Canon was too excited to discuss business at the moment and was about to excuse himself and go to dinner when a man entered the arbor with a note for Bradford. The latter unfolded the paper and read hastily.

"The militia is summoned to meet at Couch's Fort tomorrow morning," he exclaimed, throwing the note on the table for the others to read. "Parkinson wants us to muster our battalion and meet him there."

"That's easily done if you think it advisable," said Canon slowly.

"Advisable!" exclaimed Bradford. "It's imperative! We have no recourse. How about it, Marshall?"

The latter had been plunged in gloomy reflections and now seemed to rouse himself with difficulty.

"I don't know—" he began, when Bradford cut him short with a gesture that was almost one of contempt.

"Best send out the call, colonel," he said, then added as an afterthought, "That is, if you agree."

Colonel Canon agreed hesitantly, and David, seeing that it would be some time before he could get his man alone, left the three to wrangle while he had dinner. It was all of two hours before he cornered Colonel Canon and got him to agree to endorse Benjamin Parkinson's note and request payment by his Philadelphia agent. The man was so clearly distressed that David doubted if he knew what he was signing. When he rode away it was along a street in which riflemen were already beginning to gather for the march to Couch's Fort.

During the afternoon David made three calls on a zigzag course, which, however, bore to the north. One thought drummed persistently through his mind. If there was an attack on Bower Hill and the mansion house was sacked, no one could foretell the result when the militiamen, drunk on blood and stolen liquor, spread over the country. Federal Springs lay not far from Bower Hill and Mrs. Brackenridge and Starr were there, probably blissfully unconscious of their danger.

Chapter 22

IN SPITE OF HIS HASTE TO GET TO FEDERAL SPRINGS, THE MEN upon whom he had to make his calls were so widely scattered off the beaten paths that the afternoon of Thursday, July 17, was well advanced before David reached the secluded little resort.

Federal Springs was located in a bottom on Thom's Run, less than two miles west of Chartiers Creek and about ten miles from Pittsburgh. A group of perhaps a dozen houses, bath houses, and cabins, clustered about the springs. Most of the guests occupied the cabins at night but took their meals in the main hostelry. The water of the springs was applied externally and internally and the optimistic promoters of the resort recommended it as a panacea, but particularly, as they quaintly expressed it in their advertisements, for "rheumatism, scurvy, gravel, white swellings, catahrs, and incomes on the knees."

If David had thought that the vacationers at Federal Springs were ignorant of the danger of their situation, he was disabused the moment that he appeared. The entire guest population of the resort, which consisted of five women and a dozen children, was gathered on the lawn, seated on benches or camp chairs, excitedly discussing the straggling bits of information that had reached them. When Sabina Brackenridge recognized David she all but embraced him.

"At last!" she cried, "someone from Pittsburgh. Doesn't Hugh know what is going on? Why hasn't he sent for us before?"

The others crowded around and David answered her questions methodically while he tried to keep his eyes away from Starr.

"In the first place, Mrs. Brackenridge," he said, "I am not from Pittsburgh direct, but have been to Washington County on business for your husband. In the second place, Mr. Brackenridge has gone to Greensburg on business; and in the third place, even if he should try to reach you, it is doubtful if the militia would let him through. They have their guards out like a screen between Pittsburgh and Bower Hill."

"But isn't there some way we can get home? Mrs. Woods, and Mrs. Thorne, and Mrs. Dayton, and I are all marooned here with our children. David, you've got to get us out."

"Has Bower Hill been attacked yet?"

"We haven't the foggiest idea," answered Sabina.

"Well, if you want to take the risk," said David, "we could go down the creek to the Rocks. It ought to be easy enough to get to Pittsburgh from there."

"The very thing!" exclaimed Sabina.

"Mr. Sterret has a light wagon he could let us have," volunteered Starr.

"If he won't," said Mrs. Woods grimly, "we'll commandeer it."

Mr. Sterret, when he was summoned, readily agreed to lend his wagon and a team of horses, though he deprecated the thought of danger. He harnessed the horses while David filled the wagon box with new straw. It would be a bumpy journey, opined David to Sabina, but all the women and children could squeeze in if they left their baggage behind.

Half an hour later they were on the march. Sabina took the reins as a matter of course.

"Any girl who can jump a fence after a cow," she said

roguishly in her faintly German accent, "ought to be able to handle a span of horses."

And she did, too, driving the team with practiced dexterity and avoiding the worst bumps with a nonchalance that was soon David's admiration. Starr sat beside her in the seat, holding the infant Cornelia Brackenridge while the other women and children bounced about on the straw and squealed at every bump, half in alarm and half in excitement.

About two miles from the springs they emerged from the valley of Thom's Run into the greater valley of Charters Creek and stopped to breathe the horses. No sooner had the grinding of the wheels and the click of the horses' shoes on the stony road ceased than David was aware of a faint crackling sound beyond the creek. The source of the noise was not difficult to find.

From a long, low house on their right, the country home of Presley Neville, a wide swath had been cut in the forest up the side of Bower Hill to the mansion house of General Neville on its summit, nearly a mile away, and through this great lane the mansion house was clearly visible in the rays of the lowering sun. The watchers in the valley below could make out puffs of black powder smoke from the mansion and its outhouses and from the edge of the clearing in which they were built. Pillars of smoke ascending from some of the outhouses indicated that they were afire. Suddenly the shots ceased and there was a swarm of animated black dots around the house as the besiegers gathered in. David was suddenly conscious of the change that had come over him. A year before he would have been the foremost among the attackers; now he was conscious only of horror at the drama being enacted on the hill. This was no way to defend western rights.

David caught Sabina's eye and nodded. She slapped the

reins and the team started down toward the creek. After following it for some distance they splashed through its waters and rode on the other side. Even the children were quiet now, sensing from their mothers the seriousness of the scene they had just witnessed.

The road was so narrow and rutted that David rode ahead most of the time, glancing back now and then. He had not spoken a word to Starr since the start, yet it seemed to him that they conversed as they rode, saying the things they had never said and probably never would. These weeks away from him, said David, have driven the shadows from your eyes and made you lovely as a pale, fragile flower. Why must you go back to him? It would have been more merciful of me to have left you to the drunken mob. When we get to the Rocks come away with me. I will get a boat and we'll drift down the river to the new land. Yes, there is danger from the redskins, but there is danger for us everywhere. Some day I will murder that husband of yours. If I don't, he will murder you first. Come with me. We have nothing to lose, either of us, and everything to gain.

David dropped back to the wagon, where the women and children were eating the food they had hastily snatched before their departure. Far back of them in the gathering dusk a faint glare showed on the southern sky.

"They must be burning the mansion house," said Starr.

Her face was calm but her heart was pounding furiously. If she only dared to reach out and touch him. For more than a year now she had loved him, yet their hands had never met and only once had she spoken. David moved on ahead and she followed him with her eyes. If we could only ride on forever, she thought. If only you and I could go on together down the river to the new land. I am afraid of the river and the savages, but I would be brave with you near me. But no—we can't do that. You have to make

something of yourself. It is your duty, my darling. I'd rather live a thousand deaths with that old man than to stand in your way.

David turned in the dusk and waved a cautioning hand, and Sabina stopped the team and waited while he seemed to be swallowed up at the end of the road.

"Horsemen," Sabina whispered to Starr. The two girls drew together for comfort and listened to the clatter of horses' feet in the distance. The noise ceased and they heard the far-off murmur of voices. The children, frightened by the darkness and the mysterious sounds, began to whimper, and little Cornelia broke into a short obbligate of sympathetic wails. Once a man called out sharply and the trembling women heard David answer him angrily, then go on rapidly in a burst of unintelligible words. There were clipped answers from the men and they seemed to wheel and ride into the darkness in the direction from which they had come.

"It's all right," came David's voice. "Come ahead."

He was riding now just ahead of them, so close that the horses' noses almost touched his mare's tail. They labored up a long gentle slope and began the descent. The waters of Chartiers Creek glimmered faintly on the left.

"Over there," said David, swinging his left arm, "is what's left of General Hand's military hospital."

They were skirting a line of hills on the right now, completely wrapped in their shadow. A short ascent, and they seemed to be in a pass, for the shadows broke away. A few minutes later David took one of the horses' bridles and led them down a gentle bank into the creek; the women could hear the water running against the wheels and the beasts snorting their protests at the slippery footing. Then the wagon was rising again, apparently headed for a steep hill,

but the horses suddenly turned right and after a short climb came out on a plateau.

"We're almost to the Rocks, now," came David's cheery voice, and the women, weighted down with drowsy children, breathed sighs of relief.

Half an hour later, as the moon was beginning to rise, they turned into a farm yard. A door opened and Thomasina appeared, surrounded by her brood, and waving a rifle admonishingly.

"It's Dave, Aunt Seena," shouted David. "Put up your gun. I've brought company for us."

David slid from the bay mare and Starr passed Cornelia down to him. He held the baby in one arm and gave his hand to Starr while she climbed over the wheel. This is the first time our hands have ever touched, thought David as he gave her the baby and turned to help the other women and children from the wagon. By this time Thomasina was in the barn yard with a tin lantern, acknowledging David's introductions and besieging him with questions.

"Aunt Seena," said David finally, in desperation, "the militia has burned Bower Hill and blocked the direct road to Pittsburgh, so we had to come by the Rocks. Now will you rustle up something for us to eat and I'll tell you the rest later?"

At this Thomasina became her usual bustling, efficient self and set the children and the negroes to work with a flood of sharp orders. The women and children were herded into the house and David, with Old Tom's help, took the harness from the horses, fed them, and turned them into the stable enclosure. The old man had surrendered his loft to the guests and now with a blanket under his arm, he departed to find a place to sleep in the hay.

David walked across the moonlit barn yard toward the dark bulk of the house. Something white moved out of the

shadows to meet him and his heart gave a great bound. It was Starr.

They stood on the edge of the moonlight looking into each other's faces for a long moment, then David bent and kissed her on the forehead. All the hundreds of things he had wanted to say to her during the past year were swept from his mind as if they had never existed. Starr's eyes shone with the soft luminousness that had entranced him from his first sight of her. He lifted one pale hand. The fingers were long and thin, he noted subconsciously, but the knuckles were large and rough as if from much hard work.

"I love you," he whispered.

Starr's hands were on his breast and she was looking up into his eyes.

"Let it be a sin," she said fiercely, "I can't help it. I love you, David, as I never thought I could love a man."

"You have hated men," said David. "They have misused you."

"No—no," she interjected quickly. "Only—only him. But I thought all men must be like him."

"Let me take you away from him," said David suddenly. "Now. We can take the skiff and float down the river. I know it like a book. We can find a home somewhere down there, perhaps in the Spanish territory."

The girl's hands tightened on his coat. "Oh, if we only could," she breathed. For a moment she seemed carried away by the vision, then her hands dropped and she turned half away.

"No—we couldn't do it. You've got yourself to think of, David. You've got to study and work so that you will be a great man some day."

"A great man?" echoed David. "Nonsense."

"Lawyer Brackenridge says so," returned Starr quickly. "Sabina told me."

"Even if he is right," cried David, placing his hands on her shoulders, "I'd rather have you."

"But don't you see, darling. If we go down to the new country you'll have no chance to study. You'll have to farm—or be a boatman or trapper. I would only be standing in your way."

A hot rejoinder rose to his lips but suddenly there flashed across his mind the incident of the last fall when Arcola de Cavalini had come to his cabin and begged him to marry her and take her down the river. Starr had saved him then—perhaps she was right now. His hands dropped to his sides.

"Very well," he said, "we'll wait—but only on one condition. If you ever need me you'll call on me just as though I were your husband."

The moon was veiled behind a cloud, but David seemed to see her face flower-like and luminous, even in the gloom.

"I will, David," she said softly. "Just as though you were my husband."

David's arms went out and gathered her into their protection and their lips met in a long, fervent kiss. The next moment the moon passed from behind the cloud and revealed him standing alone in the barn yard.

Chapter 23

BRACKENRIDGE HAD RETURNED HOME JUST BEFORE THE final attack on Bower Hill and had gone out with Judges Gibson and Wilkins, Sheriff Ewalt, Marshal Lenox, Presley Neville, and Prothonotary Thorne to try to head off the attack. On the road they learned that they had come too late, so Brackenridge, with the judges and the sheriff, had turned back to Pittsburgh.

The others had gone on and had been captured by the screen of militia scouts; that night they had been carried off toward Couch's Fort in the midst of a mob enraged by stolen liquor and the death of their leader, Major James McFarlane. Fortunately for the prisoners they were enabled to escape by some of the cooler-headed militiamen and made their way safely to Pittsburgh. Presley Neville, however, had given security that the marshal would surrender himself upon demand. It also became known to Pittsburgh now that General Neville had escaped from his home before the attack but that the defense had been made by a file of soldiers from Fort Fayette under Lieutenant Repperger aided by Neville's brother-in-law, Major Kirkpatrick. The soldiers had been allowed to go upon their surrender but Kirkpatrick had made his escape with difficulty in the confusion at Couch's Fort.

Pittsburgh had become a prey to alarms and fears. The common understanding among the countrymen, it was said, was that as soon as the processes were returned to Philadelphia the government could confiscate the property of those served. The favored solution was to march on Pitts-

burgh and kill Marshal Lenox and sieze the processes before they could be returned to Philadelphia. It was better, they said, that one person should die than that so many families should lose their livelihood.

The day after the destruction of Bower Hill the militia gathered at Mingo Church for the funeral of their leader. All that was needed, said rumor, was a leader to incite them to march on Pittsburgh and take vengeance. The Democratic societies, continued the rumor, were on the verge of taking over the government of the Monongahela country and issuing a declaration of independence. Rumor had even selected the president of the West, Lawyer David Bradford of Washington Town, and had invested him with dictatorial power.

Finally there appeared in Pittsburgh two emissaries from the Mingo Democratic Society, armed with demands that Marshal Lenox surrender the processes and that General Neville resign as inspector of the revenue. Every road out of Pittsburgh, they announced, was guarded, and the committee of the Democratic Society was waiting just beyond Coal Hill. Pittsburgh trembled with apprehension and the inhabitants were in the streets gazing fearfully up at the towering heights of Coal Hill and imagining that they saw men in hunting shirts moving about the crest. Ominous whispers arose that it was better to give up Neville and Lenox than to have the town burned. The apprehension finally reached such a pitch that one of the emissaries, gravely admitting that there might be several hundred men waiting to seize the town, agreed to cross the river and ask them to disperse. He returned presently with the assurance that there had been no one about, but the timorous only felt the more firmly that he was playing a deep game.

To Brackenridge, as the most reliable legal authority in the town, both Neville and Lenox applied for advice.

Neville was advised to give up his commission until he was in a stronger position, but stoutly refused to do so. Lenox claimed that no judgments could be taken out on the strength of the processes and, after a night of study, Brackenridge gave an opinion that was in entire agreement. The two emissaries, completely unsuccessful in their mission, departed, and that night Neville and Lenox fled to Wheeling in an army boat, and from there went on to Philadelphia.

The flight of General Neville and Marshal Lenox increased the danger of a march on Pittsburgh by the infuriated militia, and the possibility was enhanced by the fact that Neville's son-in-law, Major Craig, kept the excise office open in the old redoubt of Fort Pitt on Water Street, and the notice advertising it as such was boldly nailed on the door. When the cautious Brackenridge heard of this he was greatly perturbed, but he knew that any protest on his part would merely strengthen Major Craig's determination to keep the office open. Presently he hit upon a scheme. He went out in the street and stopped the first person he met.

"Have you heard," he said, "that there are five hundred whiskey boys on their way to burn down the town because the excise office is being kept open?"

Within a few minutes the town was aflame with the news, now supposed to be true. When Tarleton Bates told his employer of the report, the major rushed out, ripped the notice from the door, tore it to pieces, and called upon a countryman standing by to witness his action. Young Bates watched the major's terror with amusement but, like the judicious young man he was, said nothing.

Sunday passed with no fulfillment of the threats that kept seeping through from the domain of Tom the Tinker. On Monday a young man appeared in Brackenridge's outer office and handed David a note.

"For Lawyer Brackenridge, from Daniel Hamilton," he explained, and departed.

The lawyer read the note with knitted brows, then glanced around with an air that was almost furtive.

"Was anyone else present when you received this?" he demanded sharply.

"No one."

"Then no one must know of it. You understand me, David, no one."

"I understand."

David closed the door between the offices and the lawyer read the note again. It was an invitation on behalf of the Mingo Democratic Society to attend a meeting at the meeting house the next Wednesday to take up the problems arising from the attack on Bower Hill. He would, he swore to himself, rather have taken another beating from Gurdon Thorne than to have received this note, for it placed him in the danger of being accused of having participated in treason. It was with a foreboding of evil that he tore the note to pieces and threw the scraps into the darkest corner of his closet along with the other waste paper that had collected there safe from Sabina's broom.

What, therefore, was his perturbation the next day when Presley Neville, of all people, walked into his sanctum and asked if he had not received a message from David Hamilton.

"I did," answered Brackenridge, "but how did you come to a knowledge of it?"

"I was informed of the note and its contents by the young man who brought it," answered Neville.

"I had not intended to mention it," said Brackenridge. "In fact, I tore it up and threw it here in the closet." He got down on his knees in the closet and fished out the fragments, then anxiously pieced them together on the

table. His only protection, he saw, was to convince Neville that the note did not necessarily incriminate him in the treason of its author. Neville read the note carefully.

"Do you intend to go?" he said.

"No," answered Brackenridge, and launched into what was intended as a defense of himself and an explanation. "The attack on Bower Hill was high treason because it was taking up arms to prevent the prosecution of the laws of the United States. In treason there are no accessories before or after the fact; all are principals. If I went I would be in danger, therefore, of laying myself open to an accusation of treason. Naturally, I cannot take the risk."

Neville's answer was a surprise. "I wish you would go," he said. "It might answer a good end to have you there to explain the nature of the situation."

"And," added the lawyer, "to defend the flight of your father and the marshal."

"Of course," said Neville. He resorted to flattery. "Your opinion as a lawyer bears the most weight of any in this region and is most likely to be heard with respect by the rebels."

"Under the circumstances," rejoined Brackenridge pointedly, "that is a doubtful compliment."

But the younger man persisted in the argument and finally won a reluctant consent.

"I will go," said Brackenridge, "provided that you will vouch for my sentiments and provided some others can be got to accompany me to bear testimony to what I shall say or do."

So it was that, with many misgivings and much against his better judgment, Brackenridge set off the next morning with half a dozen townsmen.

Not only were the leaders of the attack on Bower Hill present but other prominent men, including David Brad-

ford and James Marshall. Bradford, fully conscious of the delicacy of his situation, had demurred at attending but had been reminded by the Mingo men of his share in encouraging violent measures.

"I encourage," he had cried. "Good God! I never thought of such a thing."

"Yes, you did," was the significant answer, "and if you do not come forward now and support us you will receive the same treatment as General Neville."

At the Mingo meeting house every countenance reflected the solemnity of the occasion. Few ventured to converse or even to exchange greetings as they waited for the meeting to open. From the ground before the church the fresh earth upon the grave of James McFarlane could be seen, and if any further reminder of the precariousness of their position was needed they could see McFarlane's brother, Andrew, moving through the throng with a black scarf about his arm.

After the meeting had been organized, a rather high and mighty letter from Presley Neville was read in which he endeavored to excuse the flight of the marshal. The letter was received with suppressed resentment but without open comment. David Bradford then arose to speak in favor of supporting those guilty of the attack on Bower Hill, and, carried away by his own eloquence, his speech soon became a harangue. Brackenridge listened with visible agitation, for he suspected that, being used to having onerous duties thrust upon him, he would be called upon next.

His fear was not misplaced, for when Bradford sat down Marshall lost no time in calling upon him. He began haltingly, for he had a difficult course to steer between treason on the one hand and popular odium on the other. Presently, however, he warmed to his task, but instead of dealing with the problems in hand, he endeavored to put his sulking

audience in a better frame of mind by various sarcastic thrusts at the excise and by telling a series of humorous anecdotes, among them the story of how he had got Major Craig to tear down the excise notice.

Then suddenly he swung to the subject that had brought about the meeting.

"What has been done," he said bluntly, "may be morally right, but it is legally wrong. It is high treason and the president has it within his power to call out the militia to deal with the situation."

The audience was amazed and disturbed, for most of its members had thought that their actions were cognizable only in the county courts. Having struck this telling blow Brackenridge went on to suggest that the way out was to petition for an amnesty, and that in seeking this those who had not been involved in the attack should not be dragged into the matter but should be free to act as mediators. At this there were black looks from those who had been at Bower Hill and sighs of relief from the others. Brackenridge went on at great length in support of his proposition and added that another meeting, composed of regularly constituted delegates from the various election districts, should be called to see to the matter.

The assemblage was so dazed by Brackenridge's revelation of danger that no one seemed capable of disputing him. The men began to drift out of the church and stand about in knots discussing the situation, then presently met to call a meeting for August 14 at Parkinson's Ferry. The Pittsburghers, however, fearful of being called upon to vote on the matter of supporting the the Bower Hill attack, had departed.

But the supporters of violent action had not been silenced. After his return home Brackenridge found that many of his

fellow townsmen were inclined to wish that the rioters had been upheld.

"But," objected Brackenridge to one of these men, "what would be the result? War, as sure as you're a foot high. We would be heading for the very cropper that the young fox in the Philadelphia treasury has been preparing for us."

"Well," was the answer, "let those that do not choose to stand with the country leave it; there will be enough left without them."

Then suddenly there came word that the post rider from Pittsburgh to Philadelphia had been robbed of his mail in order to discover the sentiments of prominent Pittsburghers toward the excise. For a day the little town at the forks of the Ohio waited anxiously for the next step. It came with overwhelming force. The militia of the four western counties was ordered to meet on Friday, August 1, at Braddock's Field, prepared to march on Pittsburgh. The order was signed by seven names, but most prominent of them in sprawling, domineering letters was that of David Bradford.

Bradford had thought by this movement to involve so many in the embroilment that the great number concerned would prevent extreme punishment. The reaction from the conservatives of Washington was immediate and their pressure was so great that Bradford countermanded the call. But he had reckoned without the host. The members of the Mingo Democratic Society and their sympathizers among the militia stormed into Washington and demanded of Bradford that the muster be held.

Leading conservatives pled with a meeting of the militia but the popular tide was not to be stemmed. David Bradford, confronting this sea of faces, was carried away once more and became more violent than ever. He denied that he had issued the countermanding order and boldly de-

manded to face the scoundrel who had accused him of it. Tom the Tinker was in the saddle riding hard for the cropper that the astute Alexander Hamilton had prepared for him.

Chapter 24

BRACKENRIDGE RESTED HIS ELBOW ON A KEG OF FLOUR IN the rear of Beaumont's store and watched the coolly indifferent clerk wait upon a woman whose homespun garments and misshapen figure, stooped with years of field labor and child-bearing, proclaimed her to be from the country. Anger was evident in the tone of her voice and in the way she flung back on the counter the ribbon she had been holding. As she stalked from the store the lawyer came forward.

"What was it she said?" he asked.

"She said she'd get it for less in a few days, Mr. Brackenridge," the clerk answered.

The lawyer walked to the door and looked out into the street. The woman had been joined by a man whose red thatch gleamed in the July sun and who bore under his arm a long, murderous-looking rifle. The pair turned into another store.

"Probably intends to buy flints and powder," mused Brackenridge. He hesitated a moment, then crossed the street to the shop of Dennis McCarty, who, though he preferred to shoe horses, sometimes tried his quick Irish fingers at gunsmithing. The smith dropped the handle of his bellows as his neighbor entered.

"Ah, the top o' the mornin' to ye, Misther Brackenridge. What kin I do for ye?"

"Nothing, Dennis. Just a spark with you," answered the lawyer. "How is business these days?"

The Irishman wiped his sweaty hands upon the grimy

legs of his trousers. "Faith," he said, "I haven't seen it so good sence the Injun scare three years ago come next Christmas. Ivery Orange psalm-singer in the north ind of Washington County has been in to have his gun minded."

The Scotch lawyer raised his eyebrows and smiled slightly. In spite of their differences in race and religion the two understood each other.

"It looks bad, Dennis," he commented.

"Ye're roight, sor," returned the Irishman. He looked cautiously around, then spoke in lowered tones. "D'ye want to know whut it was I jist heard? That was Orris Schochan that jist left here, the red-headed, Scripture spoutin' blaggard, an' in the coorse av the conversa-tion whut d'ye think he tould me? He said that the other Sodom was destroyed by fire from hiven, but that this Sodom"—Dennis waved a black paw in a gesture that included the whole town—"that this Sodom *should be destroyed by fire from earth.*"

The lawyer left the smithy, his brows knit in thought, and walked up Front Street toward his office. David was seated at his table busily copying a brief when Brackenridge entered and dropped heavily into a chair.

"I am afraid," said the lawyer, "that Tom Tinker means business this time. Pittsburgh has become to him the exemplar of corrupt aristocracy and oppression, a den of reptiles which he means to invade and consign to the torch."

He bit nervously at his thumb. "I am reminded of my own sins," he said presently, "particularly of the academic brutality with which a year ago I wrote for the *National Gazette* that 'Louis Capet has lost his caput.' Now that the clouds of a revolution, organized and managed on Jacobin principles, begin to hover over the western country and there is danger that our own heads will be rolling before the guillotine, I can scarcely bear to cast my eye over a paragraph of French news."

"It may not be as bad as you think," comforted David. "The respectable gentlemen of Washington are still striving for an accommodation and the Presbyterian clergy are with them."

Brackenridge looked curiously at his clerk.

"Who would have thought a year ago," he said, "that David Braddee, boatman, would have spoken with approval of gentlemen of respectability—or for that matter of Presbyterian clergy."

That was true enough, commented David mentally. While he still sympathized in part with the aims of the Democratic societies, yet he had been unconsciously developing a horror of violent action. He no longer felt an insane anger that certain men should hold greater wealth and social influence than others. The change had been stealing over him for a year now, but the first time that he had been conscious of it was when he had looked up the slopes of Bower Hill at the attack on General Neville's mansion. Brackenridge was speaking again.

"As for the Presbyterian clergy, not all of Washington County is Presbyterian, and of those who are, many forget it when they get a skin full of whiskey. No, David, I'm afraid that only art can save us. We must put on the masks of friendship to save our families and homes and march forth to Braddock's Field tomorrow."

But Brackenridge was wrong in part. That night there was a meeting in the court room over Watson's Tavern of all the townsmen who could crowd in. The meeting had scarcely got started, with Judge Gibson as chairman, when David appeared and begged leave to deliver a message.

"Certain gentlemen from Washington County are present," he said, "and ask that a committee from this meeting be appointed to confer with them. They say that they are empowered unofficially by Mr. Bradford to agree to spare

the town if certain townsmen are expelled and if the rest will march out to Braddock's Field and join the display of force there."

"That means," said Judge Wilkins, "that they want us to expel the authors of the stolen letters. At last we are going to know who they are."

"They make no secret of the names," returned David. "They are Mr. Kirkpatrick, Colonel Neville, Captain Thorne, and Judge Gibson."

Judge Gibson's face flushed but he said nothing. Gurdon Thorne, however, was on his feet at once.

"I refuse to be bullied into abandoning my home and property," he shouted angrily.

"You and I will be governed by the will of the majority, Captain Thorne," said Judge Gibson quietly. Then, "If there is no objection from the meeting I will appoint Messrs. Brackenridge, Wilkins, and Wallace to interview the gentlemen from Washington."

When the three men returned with Bradford's demands there was little quibbling. The men sentenced to exile prepared to leave in the morning and further business was confided to a committee of twenty-one, of which Brackenridge was a member. A set of resolutions was drawn up stating the action taken toward the proscribed men, and agreeing to watch for further disloyalty to "the common cause," to march out to Braddock's Field the next day, and to elect delegates to the Parkinson's Ferry meeting. John Scull was instructed to strike off six hundred copies of the resolutions for distribution at the muster field and he stayed up all night working at them.

The townsmen passed the night in a fever of anxiety. Few of them went to bed. All night long candles shone in the windows as preparations were made for the fateful morrow. Guns were oiled and rusty hunting knives sharp-

ened. Money, silverware, and jewelry were buried in cellars or back yards, and Brackenridge sent a chest of his most valuable papers to a farmhouse across the Monongahela. There were even some who left town and fled to friends in the country.

As the time set for marching approached, the entire population gathered in the streets to see the start. As a resident of McKee's Rocks, David might have been exempt from attendance, but presently he appeared in hunting shirt and buckskin trousers, armed with knife, tomahawk, and rifle. Sabina, who did nothing surreptitiously, rewarded him with a kiss almost as resounding as the one she gave her husband and bade them both a cheery good-bye.

Braddock's Field, the scene of Braddock's disastrous defeat almost forty years before, was about eight miles from Pittsburgh, and the little column of two hundred and fifty men under Judge Wilkins, now functioning as a general, marched it in about three hours. Before reaching the field the committee of twenty-one, which rode in front, called a halt and sent the Washington party ahead to distribute Scull's handbills. Word came back that the handbills had been well received and the Pittsburghers then marched across the camp through thousands of militiamen and halted at a spot chosen for headquarters.

Presently a call came down the line that General Wilkins wished to see David Braddee. Brackenridge and General Wilkins were in earnest conversation when David stepped up, but they broke off at once.

"I will excuse you from duty for the rest of the day," said the general, "if you will wander around with your ears open and report to one of us what you hear, particularly with regard to the popular attitude toward Pittsburgh. Dressed as you are, you should be able to get around where

either Mr. Brackenridge or I would be sure to excite suspicion."

"Very well, sir," said David. "Will I find you here?"

"Mr. Brackenridge or I will be here most of the time until we are ready to return to town this evening," replied the general.

David turned and struck out across the camp. Much of the old battlefield had been cleared of trees and turned into pasture or grain fields, but there was considerable forest left in the rougher sections where the French and Indians had hidden themselves as they fired on Braddock's struggling red-coats. Now groups of homespun-clad countrymen lounged about the fences or under the trees, spinning yarns or fulminating against the "gov'mint." Here and there shooting matches were in progress, so that a thin cloud of powder smoke drifted through the trees as it must have done on that fateful day in 1755.

David thought of Old Tom's story of how he had shot Braddock and felt a sudden surge of sympathy for the old man. The McKee's Rocks contingent, David knew, had passed Pittsburgh on the south side of the Monongahela that morning, and he had no doubt that the old man had marched with it, for nothing could have prevented him from attending a muster at Braddock's Field, especially one directed against the excise. If he were present he would be near a certain giant oak tree, and David almost unconsciously turned toward the spot. Presently he heard Old Tom's cracked voice issuing from a group of yellow-shirted men standing under the well-remembered oak.

"Yes, sir," the old man was saying, "it was under this very tree that General Braddock was a-ridin' when I drewed the bead on him that brought him down."

David approached the group and glimpsed his grandfather vigorously mopping his brow with a square of grimy

linen in one hand while he gesticulated with the other. David watched him for a moment, then quietly slipped away. If the old man once caught a sight of him he would probably not be able to shake him for the rest of the day.

"We was fightin' for our liberty that day, boys," said Old Tom, "tryin' to keep a Dutch king from fastenin' a bloody excise on our free American backs—"

"Ain't you gittin' the French War mixed up with the Revolution, gaffer?" put in a drawling voice.

"Who? Me?" came Old Tom's indignant retort. "I fit in both o' them, young feller, an' I ought to know—"

His voice trailed off among the trees. David was heading toward the Monongahela River now, and presently he came out where he could see its muddy waters. In 1755 Braddock's engineers had made cuts in the bank for the convenience of their wagon trains, and these cuts were now used by the Mingo Creek battalion that was wading across the river at the ford. As the men came out of the water they drew up in badly bulging ranks while a mounted officer in a bright blue coat and with long plumes waving from his hat sat before them with drawn sword. A man in a yellow hunting shirt came from the channel of the river with his hat full of water and passed it up to the officer to drink. When the horseman had drunk, he passed the hat back to its owner and turned his horse up the hill.

"Bradford, by God!" said David suddenly, aloud.

A man in a hunting shirt turned and looked at him with some resentment.

"Sure, and why not?" he said. "It's a lay-der we need if we're a-goin' to take Sodom an' bu-urn the fe-ederalists like sna-akes in their dens."

David edged away and presently was in a group of on-lookers that stood opposite the militia line. The militiamen, sopping wet to their belts from their recent passage of the

river, received Bradford with cheers and yips and some of them elevated their hats on the muzzles of their rifles. Bradford waved his sword at them in a gesture that one would have been hard put to find in a manual of arms and passed on. As he came to the ground in front of David two horsemen appeared and reined up across his path. It was Brackenridge and General Wilkins.

"Sir," said the general, "have you anything against me?"

"No," answered the Washingtonian, feeling that he could afford to be magnanimous in the hour of his triumph. He turned to Brackenridge.

"Well, Mr. Brackenridge, have the obnoxious citizens been sent away?"

"Yes," said Brackenridge, "we packed them off this morning."

"Is there no danger of their return?"

"By God, they'd better not come back," flared Brackenridge, with an unaccustomed oath. "If they do, we'll see how they stretch hemp."

"Good," said Bradford. He waved his sword in a familiar greeting and passed on. Brackenridge rode on, his face set in a joviality that David recognized as only a mask for the seething anxieties beneath.

Wherever he went, David heard threats of vengeance against Pittsburgh, but quite often they struck him as being too vehement to be sincere. Many of the loudest boasters seemed to look about with shifty eyes, as if they were afraid of being called half-hearted by their fellows. Such men as young Senator James Ross, who made no secret of their opposition to violent measures, were heartily damned as traitors to the people and tar and feathers were the least of the punishments promised them.

But there were more subtle methods of discouraging

violence, as David discovered when he came upon Brackenridge seated in a circle of militiamen.

"Are we to take the fort?" someone asked the lawyer, evidently thinking that he was in the councils of the leaders.

"Of course," Brackenridge answered.

"Can we do it?"

"Not a doubt of it."

"But at a great loss?"

"Not at all," the wily lawyer answered. "Not above a thousand killed, and five hundred mortally wounded."

The blood-thirst of the militiamen was perceptibly cooled, and Brackenridge rose with a careless good-bye and departed.

The afternoon wore away and evening was at hand when David saw a column of militia marching through the camp.

"It's the Pittsburghers, by God," shouted a man. "I told ye they was traitors. God, what we won't do to them tomorrow."

A murmur rose among the militia on all sides and rapidly swelled into a menacing shout. David set off for the Pittsburgh headquarters at a run and burst into the midst of the committee of twenty-one.

"You've got to bring them back," he panted. "If you don't, nothing can save Pittsburgh tomorrow."

Brackenridge looked at him with piercing, haunted eyes. "What makes you say that?"

David lifted his hand for silence. A surging murmur with shrill overtones, distinguishable however from the ordinary noises of the camp, was borne across the fields.

"It's the militia hooting and cat-calling," he said.

General Wilkins looked around him at the solemn countenances of the committeemen.

"Lawyer," he said, "you've got a good horse. Ride after



them and tell them to come back here, let their want of food be what it might."

Brackenridge lost no time in setting out and for a moment Wilkins followed his rapidly diminishing figure with troubled eyes, then turned back to the committee.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I think that nothing we can do now will prevent the militia from marching on Pittsburgh. If we are to save our families and property from fire and tomahawk it is up to us to get out there and spread the word that the Pittsburgh battalion is staying on the field tonight."

As darkness fell across the camp hundreds of fires were lit to provide lights for the troops and to drive away the mosquitoes. No effort was made by the officers to confine the men to the vicinity of their own bivouacs and hundreds of them were on the move, visiting acquaintances or boasting themselves of the morrow.

David headed for the Braddock oak, intending to find his grandfather and make up for the neglect of the day, but Old Tom was engaged. The oak stood on the lip of a shallow but wide depression, and David stood under its branches and looked down upon a sight that he was never to forget.

The near side of the ravine was crowded with men, to the number of several hundred, listening in rapt silence to the impassioned phrases of the old preacher, who stood on a stump halfway up the opposite side of the ravine. A fire blazed just below his stump and cast an eerie flicker over him; standing there in his linen mantle, grasping his rifle like a staff, and shaking his wild white beard in rage, he reminded David of a Hebrew prophet preaching in the hills of Palestine to a congregation of refugee Jehovah worshippers.

And indeed Old Tom, in his own mind at least, was a

prophet that night. He was preaching the sermon in which he likened Ezekiel's vision of the temple to the western country and he had reached the impassioned peroration with which he always closed.

"Rise, young men, in yore stren'th," he cried. "Cast out the idolaters from the holy temple of the Lord, break ye the bones of the money changers with stones; yea, grind them to powder with great stones. Bring ye the whoring kings before me and sever their necks with axes. Cleanse the blood of unclean beasts from off the holy altars, even my holy altars, and purge the unclean women from my holy courts."

He raised his rifle and shook it above his head like a reed, and the light of madness seemed to glow in his eyes. He wagged his venerable beard and his labials were spit out with vicious explosions as he launched into a jumble of half remembered denunciations from Isaiah.

"For I say unto you, ye money changers, ye land speculators, and ye axcise men, ye polluters of my sacred precincts. Howl ye, for the day of the Lord is at hand; hit shall come as destruction from the Almighty. Every man's heart shall melt and he shall be afraid; pangs and sorrows shall take hold of him, and he shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth.

"Behold the day o' the Lord cometh, cruel with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate and to destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars o' heaven shall not give their light; the sun shall be darkened in his coming up, and the moon shall shine no more. And I will punish the speculators for their evil and the axcise men for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogance o' them that sell us for gold to cease and the pride o' the admeenistration shall be laid low.

"And Pittsburgh, the glory of the western country, shall

be as Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited from generation to generation, neither shall the hunter build his lodge thar. But the wild beasts o' the desert shall lie thar, and its houses shall be full o' tarrible creeturs. The screech owl shall screech in its chambers and the panther shall yowl in its taverns. And the wild beasts o' the mountings shall cry in its desolate houses, and dragons in its pleasant palaces."

David turned and walked slowly away. There was something sad, he thought, in the old man's ravings, yet there was an elemental appeal in them—at once a call to battle and a blind groping for justice. Probably Old Tom's sermons, for all their ignorance and incoherence—perhaps because of them—expressed the hopes and the fears of the back countrymen better than did the speeches of their political leaders or the sermons of the Presbyterian ministers.

And yet, David saw now more clearly than ever before; this was not the way. He thought of the day a few weeks before when he had walked to the Rocks with Mr. Brackenridge. We have our constitution and our own representatives, the lawyer had said. If these differences are not settled peaceably, one of two things will happen—either the country will split into as many warring little states as the Germanies and fall a prey to predatory European powers, or it will be conquered and ruled by a Caesar from within.

General Wilkins had said that nothing could prevent the militia from marching on Pittsburgh. If such incendiaries as Old Tom had their way, nothing but a miracle could prevent its destruction, and if it were destroyed the event that Brackenridge had feared might come to pass. An American Caesar might yet ride through its smouldering ashes.

Chapter 25

THE NEXT MORNING DAWNED BRIGHT AND CLEAR, WITH the promise of a hot day to follow. Word now went through the camp that Major-General Bradford willed that delegates from each battalion should meet him for a council of war. The delegates were men of influence, among them young Senator James Ross of Washington, who had once been a protégé of Brackenridge; old William Findley, a congressman from Westmoreland County, the wily democrat who had laid the trap that had precipitated Brackenridge from the legislature; and the aristocratic young Genevan, Albert Gallatin, who still spoke with a marked French accent and had found his way to the Pennsylvania frontier as the result of a fortunate speculation in land.

Bradford, eager to shine as a speaker, refused the chair, and Edward Cook, a respectable landowner from Fayette County, presided. The council was held in the woods and the members sat around on logs or on the ground, while outside the circle a crowd of curious and interested militiamen observed.

Bradford opened the proceedings by stating that the purpose of the muster was to punish certain individuals friendly to the excise. He read the letters taken in the mail robbery and made acrid comments on the side. David, who was one of the observers from the side lines, felt certain that, since the individuals in question had been exiled from Pittsburgh, Bradford was simply seeking an opportunity to talk. Brackenridge seemed to have the same idea, for he soon began

playing up to the major-general, seeking his opinion with flattering deference and addressing to him the anecdotes with which he abounded.

If Brackenridge hoped by delay to prevent a march on Pittsburgh he was disappointed. The growing impatience of the spectators was plainly apparent to David, particularly that of a dozen stalwart hunting-shirted woodsmen who had ranged themselves by a log, leaned upon their rifles, and listened intently. As the debate dragged on with no promise of a conclusion, one of them suddenly straightened up and smacked his hand on his rifle barrel.

"Gentlemen," he said peremptorily, "we do not understand your counselling in mystery; do something speedily or we will go to execution ourselves."

There was a moment of stunned silence in the committee, then Bradford asked if it was agreed that the troops start for Pittsburgh at once.

"By all means," agreed Brackenridge promptly, "and if with no other purpose, at least to exhibit the power of the opposition to executive oppression, and to show that the strictest order can be preserved and no damage done. The troops will march through the town to the banks of the Monongahela, and after taking a little whiskey with the inhabitants of the town will embark and cross the river."

The meeting broke up hastily and the committeemen dispersed to their battalions. Young Senator Ross fell into step with Brackenridge and David dropped behind to allow them privacy.

"You have a great deal of subtlety," said the senator with a smile, "but you will have occasion for it all. Methinks the veil is already getting too thin."

There was a quick step behind David and a tall man whom he recognized as Benjamin Parkinson brushed past.

Parkinson's freckled face was flaming as he seized Brackenridge by the arm and spun him half around.

"It is well for you gentlemen of Pittsburgh," he burst forth angrily, "that the meeting broke up when it did, else we would have taken notice of you. Give us whiskey! We aren't going to Pittsburgh for whiskey!"

Brackenridge's countenance lowered and Ross was on the verge of stepping between the two men to prevent a fight. The Pittsburgher controlled himself by a visible effort.

"I meant no more," he replied placatingly, "than that we should drink together. I am sorry if anything I said should be interpreted as injuring the cause."

Parkinson stepped back, uncertain of the next move, and Brackenridge took the opportunity to escape.

"You must pardon me if I hurry off," he said. "I am expected by the Pittsburgh company to report the decision of the meeting."

The Pittsburgh committee of twenty-one assembled hastily and formed a plan of action. Some of the members rode ahead to warn Major Butler that the militia was coming and to implore him to keep the garrison of Fort Fayette out of the town. Others were to warn the stores and taverns to close, to collect food and whiskey on the Monongahela bank near the end of Smithfield Street, so that the militia-men would have no excuse to wander around the town, and to gather all available boats for the passage of the troops.

Meanwhile the drums were beating and the men taking their places in the ranks. Bradford appointed an officer of the day to marshal the troops and set Brackenridge with Daniel Hamilton, a Mingo Democratic Society fire-eater, to lead the van. He sent, moreover, a messenger to Major Butler to assure him that the militia meant no harm to the fort, a move that suggested that he was not as eager to precipitate a conflict as his words and actions showed. In

fact, most of the prominent men who marched that day were praying that nothing would happen to kindle the flames of a revolution.

At General Wilkins' whispered injunction, David had attached himself to a company of the Mingo Creek battalion, which marched in the van. With the radicals from that vicinity, he soon found, the march was not a show of strength but the first move toward levying war against the United States. Many of them confidently expected to plunder the fort and the town. Shouts of "Huzza for Tom the Tinker!" resounded from the ranks as the march began. One ragged fellow put his battered hat on the muzzle of his rifle and twirled it about.

"It's a bad hat now," he said significantly, "but I'll have a better one soon."

At the top of a hill from which he could obtain an unobstructed view David stopped and looked back. The line of march, he calculated, must have been well over two miles long, and might have included five thousand men. They had rounded the great curve of the Monongahela that cut off Braddock's Field from Pittsburgh and were in sight of the towering heights of Coal Hill. A tall, yellow buckskinned fellow jerked a thumb at the hill.

"I 'spect Sal's over thar by now," he said.

"Waitin' to help with the plunderin'?" said David.

"Sure. All our womenfolks air thar." The man looked suspiciously at David. "You don't belong to this battalion, stranger."

"No," answered David, "I'm from the Rocks. Name's David Braddee."

"Mine's Bob Hargus," said the man. "You any kin to Sam Brady?"

"No. My old man's a boatman."

"Sure enough? Big Matt Braddee?"

"Yes. Do you know him?"

The man unslung his gourd canteen and offered David a drink of whiskey.

"No, but I've heered a-plenty about him. That must've been your grandfather a-preachin' to us last night. He don't spare no love for Washington."

"Why should he?" demanded David. "Washington had him tied to a wagon wheel once and given thirty-nine lashes on the bare back."

The man wriggled uncomfortably in his yellow hunting shirt. "I had my taste o' the cat, too," he said. "The scars still itch when I think of it. I ain't had no use fer gov'mints and ginerals sence. It was us that won the war anyway, not the ginerals—not even Washington. Fer all o' him we'd've been licked to a frazzle if we hadn't've had sich good marchin' feet and, what's as much to the pint, if the Britishers' ginerals hadn't been so addlepat and hollow-legged and carried sich all-fired see-ductive whores in their baggage."

"Treason!" grinned David. He was beginning to feel as if he might like to take a whirl at plundering Pittsburgh himself. This veneer of education that he had been taking on was pretty thin after all, he noted without surprise.

The militiaman grinned back over the canteen and winked portentously.

"This ain't the United States army," he said, "and Dave Bradford ain't a gineral. If he thinks he is, jist let him try to give any of us Mingo boys thirty-nine stripes. Lashin' a man within a inch o' his life ain't in keepin' with the dignity of a democracy."

It was late in the afternoon when the Mingo battalion swung down the valley of Suke's Run and then up the slopes of Grant's Hill. Below him David saw Mother Pearson's shebang with the old woman and her girls standing

out in front as if to attract custom. But the battalion was in no mood to chaff with the girls. Some of them still bore open wounds got in the attack on Bower Hill, and their ire was up that Pittsburgh had had the temerity to criticize their course and threaten them with reprisal from government troops. The tables were turned now and it needed but a frown to set them to seek revenge by burning and plundering. The battalion descended the hill into Fourth Street, passed the noisome slough of Hogg's Pond on the right, and turned left on Market.

"A year ago, over there in the Diamond," said David to Hargus, "the sheriff forced me to cut down a liberty pole. Lawyer Brackenridge came out with an axe and helped me."

The militiaman looked at David with renewed interest.

"I heerd o' that," he said. "It caused right smart comment up our way."

The houses along the line of march were closed, and most of the people indoors. But not Sabina Brackenridge. She was sitting on the porch with Cornelia on her lap and with Alec clinging wide-eyed to her skirts. Suddenly the lad spied David in the ranks.

"Ooh, mummy," he shrilled, "there's David."

David waved his hat and Sabina smiled and fluttered her handkerchief while Alec skipped about like a lamb and frantically flourished his arms. Definitely the occasion seemed to warrant something special in the way of celebration and he bethought him of the meaningless but inspiring slogan he had heard from the children at play.

"Huzza for Tom the Tinker," he piped excitedly.

At Alec's childish shout the Mingo men forgot their ill-humor and burst into laughter, then returned the cheer with a will. Alec, abashed at the stir he had caused, hid his face in his mother's skirts, and David chuckled to him-

self as he thought of the scene that would ensue upon Lawyer Brackenridge's return to the bosom of his family.

The townsmen had gathered great quantities of food on long tables along Water Street, and a hundred kegs of whiskey stood ready to fill the empty gourd canteens of the militiamen. Their new good humor heightened by the sight of the food and the whiskey, the Mingo men helped themselves and moved on to make way for the next battalion. Every hitching rail in town was crowded with horses while their masters thronged around the tables on Water Street.

Major-General Bradford retired to an arbor near Marie's Tavern on Grant's Hill to partake of an elaborate dinner and dilate on the accomplishments of the day. So expansive was his mood that he even granted Presley Neville's request to be allowed several days to prepare for his departure into exile. His lieutenants, however, conservative men as they were, still feared an explosion and marched the troops out of town as soon as they could, and those from Washington County, who had to cross the Monongahela, were ferried across as rapidly as possible. Someone remembered an old ford at the Point and the mounted men, who comprised at least a third of the troops, were marched through the river and up the Washington Road.

Chapter 26

BY NIGHTFALL ALL THE MILITIA HAD GONE SAVE FOR A handful of the yellow buckskinned men from the company of the Mingo battalion with which David had marched. Whiskey had destroyed their good humor and turned them into drunken brutes roving about the streets banging on doors and forcing tavernkeepers to open their bars. David found a group of them in the Green Tree Tavern. Bob Hargus was among them, and when he saw David he threw an arm across his shoulders.

"Here," he babbled, "is a rale friend o' the people. Boys, I want ye to meet Dave Braddee, a cousin o' Sam Brady. He helped put up the liberty pole in the Diamond the day Sam Brady was acquitted."

Each man shook hands solemnly, though David had talked to nearly all of them at some time on the march. He signalled to the landlord for another round of drinks.

"Squire McReady fined me and made me cut it down, too," he said.

"That's when Lawyer Brackenridge told 'em what fer," interposed Hargus.

"Huzza fer Brackenridge," said a raucous voice. "We're gonna make him pres'dent o' the six counties."

"What about Dave Bradford?" proposed David.

The man loosed a flood of tobacco juice on the sanded floor. "To hell with Dave Bradford," he said pointedly. "He talks too much."

"He dresses too gay," said another voice.

"Now, that was a right purty juniform," broke in a

fourth man. "You seemed to think right smart of it yist'day when you waded into the channel of the river to git a drink o' water fer him in yore hat."

The accused came back with a bitter rejoinder, but Hargus broke the quarrel off short.

"It's nigh time fer the signal," he reminded them. "Let's be goin'."

The group rose, picked up their rifles, and started from the tavern. The landlord tried to present the score but he was ignored save that Hargus, the last man out, cursed him roundly and pushed him headlong across one of his own tables. The men started down Water Street with firm steps and a passerby would not have known they were drunk but for their loud, quarrelsome talk.

"Where are we going?" ventured David to Hargus finally.

"Why," said the latter, "to burn Kirkpatrick's town house. Some o' the boys'll fire his house on Coal Hill as a signal, then they'll seize the ferries and come back to town. There'll be hell to pay in Sodom tonight."

David's heart sank at the portentous words. These men and the other groups of insurgents roving about town could easily put their plan into effect before the citizens could gather to oppose them. Ahead of them a man turned to the right on Market Street.

"Not that way, you fool," said Hargus. "Riddle's men will take care of Thorne. Kirkpatrick's our man, straight down the street."

David stopped and grasped Hargus' sleeve. "Are they going to burn Thorne out?" he said.

"Yes, sure," the man answered. "We're goin' to burn out all o' the men that wrote them letters."

"I've got a score to settle with Thorne," said David. "I'm turning off here."

He ran swiftly along Market Street and pounded on the Brackenridge door.

"Who's there?" came the voice of the lawyer.

"It's me, Dave. Open the door."

The door swung slowly back and Brackenridge appeared.

"Listen, Mr. Brackenridge," said David rapidly. "There is a plan to burn the houses of all the letter writers. The firing of Kirkpatrick's house on Coal Hill is to be the signal."

"There have been rumors of something like this," said Brackenridge. "I must see their leaders at once. Go to General Wilkins and tell him that under no circumstances must the Pittsburgh militia come together."

"But why?"

"Because if one drop of blood is shed between the town and the country we shall give them the excuse they want; the militia will return and burn us to the ground."

David turned reluctantly from the direction of Thorne's and went to General Wilkins' home on Wood Street. There he learned that Wilkins had been warned of trouble and had gone to Watson's Tavern to meet the militia officers of Pittsburgh. The tavern was next door to Brackenridge's and David sped back as fast as he could go. A knot of men had gathered before the tavern in the few minutes David had been gone and as he came up he heard Brackenridge heatedly arguing with them.

"This will not do," the lawyer was saying. "It is contrary to the system we have hitherto pursued and which has been successful. Return to your homes and lay down your arms. If a drop of blood is shed between the town and country it will never be forgiven. The militia will return and we shall fall a sacrifice. If these homes are to be defended, let it be by the people of the country themselves."

"That's all very well, Brackenridge," said a voice that

David recognized as General Wilkins', "but how are we to see that they do it?"

"I have just come from seeing their leaders," said Brackenridge, "and they are attending to it this very moment."

David waited no longer, but set off across lots for the Thorne house, two blocks away. From across Front Street, he saw that several hunting-shirted men were loafing before the house, and he swiftly circled and approached from the rear. His low tap on the kitchen door brought no response and he knocked again, then put his ear to the keyhole and listened. There was a faint stir within and then a silence that was broken only by the pounding of his heart and by the loud talk of the men in the street. David put his lips to the keyhole.

"It's David Braddee," he said. "Is anyone in there?"

A swift step approached, the key clicked in the lock, and the door swung open.

"David!" cried Starr softly. "I knew you would come."

David quickly stepped inside and closed the door. The girl's hands were on his arm and he could smell the perfume of her hair as he looked down into her eyes in the uncertain light from a kitchen window.

"I knew you would come," she repeated in a voice that was choked with a relieved sob.

"Why, you're crying," said David. "You mustn't do that, darling. No harm will come to you."

Starr dabbed at her eyes with a tiny handkerchief and smiled up at him.

"I—I had to cry a little," she said. "I was so glad to see you. It's all over now. See?"

David kissed her upturned face, then straightened abruptly. This was no time for kissing, he upbraided himself.

"Why weren't you gone from here hours ago?" he said.

"At first we thought we would be as safe here as anywhere; then when those men came it was too late. We were afraid to leave the house."

"Buttercup is with you?"

"Yes. She's watching from the office windows."

"We'll have to get her," said David. He walked through the house to the office and saw Buttercup's dim figure at a shutter.

"It's Mr. Braddee," said Starr.

David stepped to a shutter and looked out. A torch carried by one of the men cast weird, terrifying shadows in the dust of the street as the yellow-shirted men moved restlessly about.

"The signal!" said one of them suddenly. "There it is at last. Come on, Hank; give it the torch."

At that moment a shadowy group of men appeared across the street and a commanding voice rang out.

"Boys," it said, "are your guns loaded?"

The men in front of the house stopped in their tracks.

"Yes," answered one of them finally.

"Good!" said the voice. "Put in a second ball, and the first man that sets fire to the house, shoot him down."

The men shifted uneasily as if in embarrassment and the torch was flung into a ditch where it smouldered for a moment, then went out. The men seemed to drift apart and melt into the night. By the time the newcomers had crossed the street, not a one of the incendiaries was in sight of David's window.

"The danger's over," said David, "but I think you will rest better if you spend the night with Mrs. Woods. If you want to get some things together, I'll wait and escort you."

Starr picked up a small cloth bag from the table.

"We're ready," she said simply.

* * * * *

The insurrection was over as quickly as it had begun. The men in yellow hunting shirts eased quietly out of town before the glare had died down from Kirkpatrick's burning barn on Coal Hill, and the threatened return of the radicals among the militia, whether or not it had been seriously planned, was not attempted. Rumors, however, continued to arrive from across the Monongahela, and it was many weeks before the Pittsburghers could go to sleep without the fear of being awakened by cries of murder and rapine.

The evening of the day after the march of the militia, a sudden call was sent out for the committee of twenty-one to convene in Watson's Tavern. Thorne, it now appeared, had not left Pittsburgh, but had taken refuge in Fort Fayette, and, as if to confirm the report, Presley Neville and Major Craig appeared, coming from the direction of the fort. General Wilkins questioned them in the street and they acknowledged that Captain Thorne was in the fort, and asserted that he had left Pittsburgh as agreed but had been dogged so persistently by disaffected men as to endanger his safety. Further than that they refused to answer and abruptly walked away.

The committee, believing that Thorne had never been out of town and that the two had been privy to the deception, and anxious to attest their good faith in exiling the writers of the stolen letters, gave orders that they should be seized and sent to Washington as hostages for Thorne. Sheriff Ewalt, when he went to arrest them, found that Craig had fled to the fort, but obtained Neville's promise to appear before the committee in half an hour.

He came, sauntering into the court room with an irritating air between contempt and amusement, puffing nonchalantly on a cigar and every inch the polished and self-possessed man of the world. He was, however, somewhat shaken when he was finally convinced that the committee

meant business and that he would be arrested and sent to Washington if he did not persuade Thorne to leave town immediately.

"I am ready to engage myself to his departure," he said, "if you will furnish an escort for him."

The committeemen were taken back for a moment and looked at one another doubtfully. Finally Brackenridge spoke.

"I think that David Braddee might be willing to go," he said.

David agreed, the more readily because he felt that he could not afford to let his personal animus against the prothonotary be known, and a little while after dark set out for the fort, riding Brackenridge's horse and with the reins of Thorne's horse tied to his saddle. The night was pitch black and the going was made worse by a drizzling rain that had already turned the dust of the streets into a slippery quagmire.

The dark mass of Fort Fayette, however, loomed up before him eventually, and David was within a few rods of the gate when a man sprang across his path with a sharp cry to halt and almost jerked the reins from his hand. David's heavy brogan came up suddenly and caught the man in the jaw; then he dug his heels into his horse's flanks. The next moment he was at the fort and the sentry was swinging back the gate.

Captain Thorne was waiting in Major Butler's quarters and received David with a skeptical smile.

"Are you sure you can find the way on a night like this?" he demanded.

"Of course I can," answered David.

The prothonotary looked around at Major Butler and the other reassured him.

"Your down country eyes are not like ours, captain," he

said. "I would engage for Braddee to find the road though he had never traveled it before."

As a matter of fact David had never been east of Pittsburgh since that time nearly a dozen years before when the Braddees had found him, but he held his peace. Nor did he mention the attempt to hold him up at the gate; a knowledge of the incident, he felt, would only afford Thorne an excuse to refuse to leave the fort and might have the result of bringing on another invasion from the country.

No sooner, however, had they emerged from the fort than David kicked his horse into a trot and Thorne followed perforce, cursing him for a fool. A hundred yards ahead as they splashed through the swollen waters of a small run a bullet whizzed between them.

"What does this mean?" shouted Thorne. "Are you trying to murder me?"

"If you want to get away alive, keep your mouth shut and ride," answered David.

He forced his horse into a run in spite of the treacherous footing and held the pace for a mile. When he slowed down to allow the horses to breathe, Thorne rode up beside him.

"Why didn't you tell me that I was being waylaid?" he demanded.

David repressed a flash of anger as he answered quietly, "You don't seem to realize, Captain Thorne, that the country is on the verge of a revolution. There are plenty of people in Pittsburgh who would gladly turn you over to the Democratic societies as the price of their own safety."

"Your ambitious Lawyer Brackenridge among them, I suppose," sneered Thorne.

"On the contrary," replied David evenly, "he is aiding your escape though he has every reason to keep you here. His legal business will be greatly hampered by the lack of a prothonotary, and then his suit against you for assault and

battery comes up next month. You're lucky to be getting away with a whole skin. Only yesterday I heard Mr. Brackenridge say that he would give a year's income to have been able to trade places with any of the exiled gentlemen and leave the country."

Thorne snorted contemptuously and dropped behind. Presently the road turned away from the Allegheny River and led to the right over a spur of Quarry Hill and then within a few rods of Shadyside Furnace, in which Thorne had a financial interest. The rain had been heavier on the plateau beyond the furnace, so that it was almost daylight when they ascended the steep hill beyond Turtle Creek, a couple of miles from Braddock's Field.

Late in the afternoon they reached Greensburg and put up at the Crown and Cross Keys, intending to get a long night's rest. An hour later there was a thunderous knocking at Thorne's door and a surly voice informed him that he had half an hour to move on. Thorne cursed blackly, but he had no choice. A few miles outside of Greensburg David cut pine boughs for beds and the two exhausted men slept until the middle of the morning.

Two days later and fifty miles further on, at the summit of Allegheny Mountain, David drew rein.

"You're safe enough now," he said to Thorne, "and can go on to Bedford alone." He grinned sardonically. "I wish you more joy of your company than I have had."

Thorne lifted the reins and chirruped to his horse. "I'll see you dancing at the end of a rope when I come back with the army," he said viciously. "Until then, my compliments to Citizen Brackenridge and his rabble in arms."

He rode off down the side of the mountain and David fingered his hunting knife as he toyed with the old craving to slit the man's gullet. Escape would be dead easy. Simply hide the body and ride southwest into Kentucky and on

into the Spanish country. A year ago, he thought, he would have yielded to the impulse, but now he had other things to think of. No, he couldn't afford to do it even though Thorne's parting words might prove to be more than a mere threat. His hand dropped from his knife and he slowly turned his horse and started back down the mountain.

Chapter 27

DAVID RETURNED TO PITTSBURGH BY EASY STAGES TO GIVE his horse a chance to recuperate, so that by the time he rode into the Brackenridge back yard a full week had passed since he had left town. Nothing had changed, however; even the rumors that came from Tom the Tinker's domain beyond Coal Hill were the same. Presley Neville had left Pittsburgh and Major Craig had received orders to send his stores down river to Wayne as rapidly as possible to prevent them from falling into insurgent hands. Brackenridge had endeavored to escape by having the Pittsburghers send him as an emissary to President Washington to explain their conduct, but General Wilkins blocked the plan by saying that "he was in the same situation himself, and did not like to lose company."

Every mind was now turned to the meeting of township delegates at Parkinson's Ferry on the next Thursday, August 14. There had been time enough since the crisis of the march on Pittsburgh to enable moderate men to catch their breath, and they tacitly adopted a policy of supporting for election those who could be trusted to block radical action. All the prominent radical leaders, however, had succeeded in being elected and, as events showed, controlled a goodly minority of the two hundred and twenty-six delegates.

The Pittsburgh delegates, who included Brackenridge and Wilkins, left for Parkinson's Ferry Wednesday afternoon. An hour later Old Tom rode into town on one of Thomasina's plow horses and announced that he and David had been elected delegates from McKee's Rocks.

"What did I ever do to deserve this honor?" demanded David in amazement.

"Nothin', boy," replied Old Tom pointedly. "I jist felt that ye were an up an' comin' lad and I electioneered fer ye at the polls. We'll show 'em a thing or two between us when we git to Parkinson's."

David improved the opportunity as they journeyed to try to drum some moderation into the old man's head, and by the time they reached their destination the next morning Old Tom was undecided whether to repudiate his grandson or swing over to his side. David himself was amazed that he had been able to make any impression whatever, for the old man was notoriously set in his opinions. It never occurred to him that his grandfather not only had a secret respect for education, but was at times harried by a consciousness that he was long out of date and should step aside to make way for new men and new methods.

The meeting was well under way when the Braddees arrived. It was being held on a shoulder of the hill above the ferry in a space that had only recently been cleared of trees and so afforded stumps and logs on which the delegates could dispose themselves. Above them on the side of the hill was gathered a gallery of several hundred critical visitors, for the site was close to Tom the Tinker's Mingo stronghold; below them the hill dropped abruptly down to the flood plain and afforded a magnificent view of the Monongahela and the wooded hills beyond.

David and his grandfather found the secretary, the Genevan, Albert Gallatin, seated next to the chairman before a board laid across two stumps, and presented their credentials. Gallatin was a hard-working young man of real ability, who was already getting ahead as a politician in spite of the sly look upon his long-nosed, low-browed countenance and his utter lack of a sense of humor. He had al-

ready served a few weeks in the United States Senate before he had been thrown out for the tactical blunder of introducing a resolution calling upon Alexander Hamilton to give an accounting of his administration of the treasury.

He took the papers that Old Tom handed him and looked them over as if he were memorizing their contents, though he gave no hint of the distaste that he felt for the old rabble rouser. His ability to conceal his thoughts was his greatest asset, after his capacity for work. Presently he added the names to his roster of delegates and filed the papers in careful alphabetical order in a portfolio that lay at his elbow, and the two new delegates sought seats in the rough circle around the chairman of the meeting.

The subject under discussion was James Marshall's motion to appoint a standing committee to call out the resources of the region to repel any invasion of its rights. Presently Gallatin laid down his pen and asked permission to speak.

"What reason," said he, "have we to suppose that hostile attempts will be made against our rights, and why, therefore, prepare to resist them? Such riots as have taken place are plainly cognizable by the courts, not by an army."

To David's surprise Brackenridge rose and delivered an address in favor of the motion and wound up by proposing that, since they must be careful that their determination was not misunderstood, a special drafting committee be appointed to whip into shape this and other resolutions that Marshall intended to present. The proposition met with favor, and in the course of the afternoon was adopted.

David Bradford then rose to present a plan of defense against military invasion. Again the secretary indulged in a frontal attack and again Brackenridge seemed to favor the principle.

"The appearance of being ready and eager to fight,"

approved the lawyer, "might make it unnecessary to do so by scaring the government into giving way." But then why not leave the details to the proposed standing committee?

David could tell by the talk among the observers behind him that they thought Brackenridge was for war and highly approved of his course. Bradford's countenance, however, fell as if in disappointment, and it struck David suddenly that Brackenridge was eager to get all inflammatory resolutions into committee, where he could de-horn them. This plan seemed to be borne out by the personnel of the committee. Old Tom Braddee, to his delight, was elected to it, but he and Bradford were its only radicals. The other members were Brackenridge, Gallatin, and a solid Presbyterian elder named McHenry.

When the meeting broke up and David went down to the settlement, he saw, plainly depicted upon the faces of the countrymen who thronged it, a feeling that the revolution was on the verge of being accomplished. Old Tom was almost like a boy again. When he and David sat on the grass to eat the remnants of the cold food they had brought, the old man would scarcely leave off haranguing the people who sat around them. Before dusk a tall liberty pole with a six-striped flag was erected before Joseph Parkinson's tavern and Benjamin Parkinson, balancing on a ladder, nailed just below the flag a board bearing the legend, "Equal taxation and no excise. No asylum for cowards and traitors."

That night a huge fire was built in the courtyard of the inn and Old Tom preached to the buckskinned and homespun-clad countrymen gathered about the liberty pole. His message, this time, was one of triumph rather than vengeance; his text was "They lifted up their eyes, and saw the ark, and rejoiced to see it." He opened with an ex-

planation that the presence of the ark of the covenant meant to the children of Israel that God was with them and would bless them with freedom, peace, and prosperity; therefore they rejoiced when they saw the kine bearing it to them from the land of the Philistines. This day, he went on, the western country had seen the return of the ark to its midst. Now a man could kill his own snakes with no down-country speculators or excisemen to stop him. The greatest victory had been gained; what lay beyond was in the hands of the Lord, but it could be only peace and prosperity if they continued manfully to uphold their rights. At the close the old man raised his arms in a triumphant gesture while his white mantle gleamed in the light of the fire.

"Lord," he cried, "now lettest thy sarvant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

Brackenridge had paced nervously back and forth in the shadow of the tavern during the entire sermon, apparently listening, though in reality his mind was at times hundreds of miles away. Since the afternoon session he had found himself a popular hero, and men he had never seen before had stopped him and asked to shake his hand. The sardonic lawyer, mindful that after the ascent of a hill there was always the descent, would fain have been spared the adulation. He looked at Old Tom standing in his white mantle, so earnestly exhorting the countrymen, and shuddered for the reckoning that he saw approaching. All the old man's maunderings and the yokelry's thoughtless self-confidence would be useless in that day. Here was no effective menace to government—the means being used were too guileless and straightforward. In fact, if there was any intriguing going on in the Monongahela country it was all on the side of the government.

Brackenridge turned and went into the taproom. Ben-

jamin Parkinson was seated at a round table with a group of his cronies and looked up as the lawyer entered.

"Here is a true democrat!" he cried. "Lawyer, I want to apologize for my distrust the morning of the march from Braddock's Field."

Brackenridge made a gesture of dismissal.

"It was nothing," he said.

"Come and drink with us," invited Parkinson. "Joey, a glass for Lawyer Brackenridge."

Brackenridge took the proffered glass of whiskey and drank greedily, hoping to quiet his shattered nerves. He nodded mechanically when one of the group referred a question to him but he could not make his mind move in a straight line. He rose from his chair.

"If you will excuse me, gentlemen," he said, "I simply must get some sleep."

"Of course, of course, lawyer," said Parkinson. "You labored hard today—and effectively."

Brackenridge bowed slightly. "I only hope it proves so in the long run," he said equivocally.

Parkinson raised his whiskey glass. "Stand by us, Lawyer Brackenridge," he said significantly, "and we'll stand by you."

It was as plain an offer of the crown as could have been made and Brackenridge was sorely tempted as he spread his blanket on the floor of an upper room and laid down with his saddle for a pillow. All the materials for a revolt were at hand; they needed only a competent leader to make them effective. Brackenridge had never denied that he possessed ambitions to become a statesman; perhaps now he was being pushed by events into a fulfillment of those ambitions.

The six counties of western Pennsylvania and northwestern Virginia could probably muster twenty thousand men

if needed—men whose allegiance to the federal government was tenuous at best, men who were accustomed to the use of arms, capable of hunger and fatigue, and who could lie in the water like badgers. With proper direction they could annihilate in the mountain passes any force the government might send. And as for Wayne's army in the Northwestern Territory, it was busy with the Indians, and once it had them subdued was as like as not to stand for western independence.

Even with independence won, however, the region would be for a long time miserably poverty stricken. It needed the goods and capital of the East to develop it—unless it should seek shelter under the British flag, or the Spanish. No, he could not bring himself to either of those courses, and as for independence the game was not worth the pursuit.

The proper solution was an amnesty, but could the president, or what was more to the point, Alexander Hamilton, be made to see that? Hamilton, he knew, was out for blood—the blood of his political opponents. On their corpses he meant to build a regime that would guarantee the control of the government by the aristocratic and conservative business elements of the East. And as for Brackenridge himself, his head would fall with the rest, strive he ever so hard to stave off a revolt. The open sarcasm of his *Modern Chivalry* had marked him for the axe, long before, and now the exiled letter writers, who by some peculiar logic blamed their misfortunes on him, were in Philadelphia industriously sharpening the axe for the day of reckoning.

When he met the drafting committee in an upper room of the tavern the next morning, Brackenridge felt as if his nerves were in danger of breaking. Somehow he had to find relief, and when Old Tom appeared he eagerly



pounced upon him and tried to draw him out concerning his interpretation of the vision of the temple. The old man was delighted and flattered and launched into an interminable exposition which Brackenridge interrupted continually with humorous asides of which he would be ashamed in a saner moment. Bradford stood the by-play as long as he could, then broke in impatiently.

"Please, Mr. Brackenridge, stop laughing and let us get down to business."

"He laughs all by himself," commented Gallatin acidulously.

But in spite of his lack of humor Gallatin proved to be a veritable Trojan when it came to pulling the teeth of the resolutions, and Brackenridge was able to sit back with a sigh of relief and leave the offense to him. In the end, Marshall's resolutions were passed by the main conference in a form that deprived the standing committee of any real power.

The standing committee had been elected and the meeting was just about to adjourn when a messenger arrived with the news that commissioners from President Washington were a few miles away, waiting to treat with the westerners. The president, moreover, had issued a proclamation in which he pointedly spoke of the rioters as insurgents and called for thirteen thousand militia to march against them if they did not disperse and retire peaceably.

The fat was in the fire with the reading of the proclamation. To the dismay of the moderates, who had just been congratulating themselves on a victory, the delegates stubbornly refused to adjourn until they had seen the commissioners or at least had received the report of the special committee that would confer with them. Vainly Gallatin strove with them, for it was evident that the tone of the

proclamation had pushed the assembly almost to the verge of open rebellion.

Brackenridge had retired from the circle and was pacing about the outside when Senator Ross approached him.

"I have just received word," said Ross, "of my appointment as one of those commissioners by the president. It is absolutely essential to the success of our mission that we deal with men unintimidated by the necessity of reporting to this gathering. It is up to you to take up the cudgel and persuade them to adjourn."

"I don't see that I can do anything," said Brackenridge. "Gallatin and the others have said everything possible and failed."

"This is the turning point," answered Ross. "You must do it."

Brackenridge thought for a moment, then stepped into the circle and attracted the chairman's attention. It had struck him that the delegates were set on remaining largely because of their curiosity to see the commissioners and to taste the sweets of bargaining with them. He struck the right key at once by depreciating the possibility that the commissioners could have much of consequence to say, and the assembly, with its new confidence in him as a leader, yielded at once and voted to adjourn.

Chapter 28

D AVID RODE HOME WITH HIS GRANDFATHER AND THE other delegates from Moon Township. The meeting, they felt, had been a great success, and it was merely a matter of time before the government would be forced to give in. So confident were they of their power, now that Brackenridge had assumed the leadership, that they half hoped they would be called upon to repel an invading army. Bradford was still highly regarded, but the delegates agreed with Old Tom's dictum, "when ye're headin' fer trouble, hit's better ter tie ter a black-a-vised man than a sandy-complected one."

Evidence that the people west of the Monongahela had no monopoly on opposition to the excise was thrust under the noses of the five commissioners when, on the very evening of their arrival in Pittsburgh, a number of laborers and mechanics got together and put up a liberty pole in front of the commissioners' tavern. The celebrants were about to nail a six-striped flag to the peak when some more cautious citizens intervened and persuaded them to hoist the fifteen-striped flag of the United States.

In addition to Senator Ross, the commissioners on the part of the United States comprised Justice Yeates and Attorney-General William Bradford, who had been a roommate of Brackenridge at Princeton; on the part of Pennsylvania there was Justice McKean and General William Irvine, who had been commander in the West at the close of the Revolution and knew the region intimately. The gentlemen were gathered now in the dining room of

the inn, sipping their wine and puffing their cigars while they listened to the noise of the mob outside.

Mr. Yeates pulled meditatively at his cigar. "This puts me in mind, Thomas," he said to Chief Justice McKean, "of another evening we spent in Pittsburgh a little more than a year ago. You made some prophecies then that are now in dire risk of being fulfilled."

"Aye," said Mr. McKean, "I am appalled at their accuracy. Even the liberty pole has moved to a stance before our very door."

"The chief justice," said Yeates, in answer to the inquiring looks of the other commissioners, "pointed out to certain gentlemen of Pittsburgh then present and now in exile that the West was a powder barrel which the Democratic societies were in danger of igniting and which might set men to marching once more as in '75. He even named as the prospective leader of the movement the gentleman whom we have heard so roundly damned down country by the very men who that night held their ribs with merriment at the idea that Old Hughie might bite them."

"That's right," put in McKean. "Mr. Kirkpatrick, Captain Thorne, and the Nevilles were all there. I had forgotten the circumstance."

"If I remember rightly you said that Mr. Brackenridge was proud, gloomy, and ambitious. Well, at least we have proof enough now of the last."

"If his ambition has led him to treason," said William Bradford, "he has changed remarkably in the last seven years. He was then a lion in defense of the federal constitution, and in effect sacrificed his political career in its defense."

"You do not, then, credit the reports of the exiles?" said McKean.

"I would desire better proof before I believe them," an-

swered Bradford. "But here we have Mr. Ross, who can straighten us out on the point. What do you say, senator?"

Ross had discovered while still a law student that a long pause before speaking lent dignity to the speaker and weight to his words. Consequently he was now in no hurry to begin, but seemed to be marshalling his thoughts while his audience waited.

"Mr. Brackenridge," he said finally, "has in the past been given to overmuch haste in his actions, while his judgments have been so straightforward that they have often been taken for insults. His failure in politics, however, has led him to study the art of subtilty to such good purpose that he was on the way back into public favor when the insurrection began. There, I think, you will find the spring for the Nevilles' animus. He was by way of organizing a party in his own favor and displacing them from political power."

He paused and looked about him with dignity. He was justly proud that at thirty-two he was a United States senator and a potent political force in the state. He understood perfectly the power that he held to make or break his old mentor by a word, and though he had no intention of using this power to do harm he gained a certain satisfaction in holding the commissioners in suspense.

"Mr. Brackenridge," he finally resumed, "has avoided giving open offense to the insurgents but has exercised every means that subtilty could devise to head off their mischief. He would have succeeded at the Mingo meeting had it not been for David Bradford's plan to rob the mail; it was his strategy to save Pittsburgh from destruction by having the people march out to Braddock's Field in pretended agreement with the malcontents; and again it was he who a few days ago at Parkinson's Ferry jockeyed the destructive resolutions into committee, where they could be emas-

culated. It was a strategy that even Mr. Gallatin, with all his French deviousness, failed to comprehend at first."

"I am vastly relieved, Mr. Ross," said William Bradford. "I had always considered Brackenridge too sound a man to be led astray by the democrats' outcries against the government. His *Modern Chivalry* demonstrates that as well."

"I can tell you this," said Ross. "If Mr. Brackenridge were really behind this insurrection your task would be much more difficult than it now bids fair to be. And, for the comfort of all good federalists, I might add that when the people discover that it is he who has by subtilty dehorned their revolution, they will turn against him and shear him once more of political power. His campaign for congress is dead at this moment. Even those on the side of government will resent having been fooled to their own good interest."

Senator Ross, in spite of the honesty of his summary, made the mistake of seeming to relish the impending fall of Brackenridge. Chief Justice McKean eyed him sharply. Ross, he now recalled, had married a sister of John Woods, and Woods was the attorney for the Nevilles and shared that family's antipathy for Brackenridge. That, reflected McKean, made Ross and Brackenridge potential enemies or he didn't know his practical politics. He was conscious of a resentment against this young man, though he could find no reasonable basis for the feeling. He was renowned for his dignity, his caution, his ability, his honesty, his social acceptability, and as for fair-mindedness, he had just demonstrated that. The man was an Admirable Crichton. That, thought the chief justice, was just the trouble. He was too perfect—so perfect that he gave the impression of being smug, whether he was or not.

McKean broke into Ross' long dramatic pause.

"If he has developed as much as you admit, senator," he said, "you will not be able to hold him down long."

Senator Ross saw his mistake and would have tried to mend it, but at the moment the outer door opened and Major Craig entered with young Tarleton Bates, his clerk. Craig was well known to all the commissioners save William Bradford and the introduction was soon made. He presented his clerk perfunctorily, then plunged into the subject uppermost in all minds. "Gentlemen," he said, "I hope that you will probe this treason to the very bottom."

"It is scarcely our business, major, to probe the treason," observed the chief justice. "We are here to seek an accommodation and submission to government."

The major's ire rose visibly. "You mean to say that no punishment is intended for the cowardly traitors who have pillaged and burned the property of gentlemen friendly to government and the laws and harried them from the country?"

"That is not for us to decide, major. We are here for a definite purpose."

"But the evidences of treason are all around you. There are not half a dozen loyal men left in Pittsburgh itself. The citizens of the town have joined the rebellion lock, stock, and barrel. They have met in conference with the rebels, have marched with them under arms to the muster against the government, and have sent men into exile. Why, they even forced me to tear down the excise notice from my door."

"Major Craig," spoke a peremptory voice from the tap-room door, "is not your view of what has happened colored more by resentment than by reason?"

Every eye swung to the newcomer. It was Brackenridge, standing tall and pale in the doorway and with a face visibly agitated by emotion. He advanced into the room,

followed at a respectful distance by David Braddee, who had had no desire to project himself into such company but had come only at the lawyer's insistence.

"Gentlemen," continued Brackenridge, "if there is any doubt of the loyalty of the people of Pittsburgh you owe it to us to make a careful inquiry. It is true that we attended the insurgent conferences, but only in the hope of heading off drastic measures. Senator Ross can inform you as to how well we succeeded. It is true that we went out to Braddock's Field, but was it any more than Richard the Second did, when a mob of one hundred thousand men assembled at Blackheath and he put himself at their head and said 'What do you want, gentlemen? I will lead you on.' And as for sending the gentlemen into exile, they and their friends seem to think that they were banished to save the town. The truth of the matter is that they have hold of the wrong horn—the town would have been in no danger save for their presence, and it was to save them as well as the town that they were sent away. These gentlemen have fallen into the common error of believing that popular movements will quickly subside if they are treated with the proper mixture of contempt and gunpowder; as a matter of fact it was only diplomacy and a certain amount of yielding to the popular will that averted bloodshed if not real revolution."

He swung on Major Craig and his demeanor was so threatening that the officer took a step backward.

"You know very well, major," he said, "that you were not forced by the people of Pittsburgh to tear down the notice. You did it of your own volition when you heard a rumor that five hundred men were on their way from Washington County to tear it down for you." He eyed the officer with a sardonic gleam. "I know whereof I speak,"

he said, "because I started the rumor. The existence of that notice imperiled the civic safety."

"You argue well, Mr. Brackenridge," replied Major Craig, then added significantly, "We shall see whether you have stroked enough insurgent fur the right way to gain your election to congress."

Brackenridge looked at the officer blankly; the pressure of successive crises had completely driven from his mind the memory of his candidacy. Before he could shape a reply, however, Mr. McKean intervened.

"Gentlemen," he said, "this is no time for divisions among the friends of government. The United States needs every supporting voice and hand."

"I can assure you, Mr. Chief Justice," said Brackenridge, "that my every thought and action has been directed toward the preservation of the federal union."

"Then," interjected William Bradford, "is it not time that you came out flat-footed in support of the law?"

Brackenridge flushed and an angry retort seemed to tremble on his lips, but he restrained himself.

"It is the consensus of opinion among the gentlemen of the committee of conference," he said, "that the region is ripe for such a declaration and that nothing is now to be gained by deferring to the violent-minded."

"It is high time," observed General Irvine. "Those who warm themselves by the fire are bound to smell of smoke."

Brackenridge flushed again and would have made an angry reply had not McKean intervened once more.

"General Irvine speaks in the broadest terms, Mr. Brackenridge," he said. "No offense was intended toward you or the other gentlemen in the committee of conference."

But Brackenridge was plunged into a deep gloom that set him to brooding once more upon the possibility of independence for the West. The next morning, though he

was feeling more cheerful, he was prompted by pique to tell Senator Ross that he had half a mind to become an insurgent. Ross was satisfactorily concerned.

"The force of genius is almighty," he said. "Give them not the aid of yours."

"Oh, I'd never think of it seriously," replied Brackenridge, flattered, "unless because of being unjustly suspected—as I rather thought I was last night."

"No suspicion can rest upon you, Mr. Brackenridge," said Ross earnestly. "The commissioners were perfectly satisfied with your answers to Craig. As to what he said, it left not the least impression."

The committee of conference proved to be in favor of open submission and yielded completely to the demand of the commissioners that the people must give evidence by voting in their regular polling places to uphold the excise law. The conformers were to receive upon the tenth day of the next July an amnesty for past offenses. The surrender of the committee was so complete that it seemed that nothing more was to be done but to set the indemnity due to the injured parties, when the *Gazette* published an article, whose misplaced humor rudely jolted the prospect of reconciliation. The article satirized the negotiations in Pittsburgh by likening them to an Indian treaty and pictured the westerners, dubbed the "Six United Nations of White Indians," as defying the "water-mellon armies from the Jersey shores" and advising them to confine their wars to the crabs and oysters on their native capes. The West rocked with merriment at the thrusts and the East howled with anger. And as usual in such cases, Brackenridge was credited with being the author, and though he denied it vigorously, there were few to believe him.

The committee of conference may have favored submission but the number of liberty poles erected along the

road to Brownsville, where it was to report to the standing committee, proved that the people thought otherwise. Word had got out that submission was going to be recommended and a rumor gained credence that the commissioners had come West with their saddlebags laden with gold and had bought off the committee.

No sooner had the standing committee met than an armed file of zealous insurgents brought before it one Samuel Jackson, a Quaker, for speaking disrespectfully of it as a "scrub congress." The charge was heard with gravity, for such language was an insult both to the authority of the committee and to the popular cause. Two witnesses affirmed the accusation and the members of the committee looked covertly at one another in embarrassment. Something would have to be done, if for no other reason than to placate the Quaker's captors, who were standing around expectantly waiting for the sentence. The awkward pause was broken by Brackenridge.

"Mr. Chairman," he said, smiling sardonically about at the committee, "this Quaker has called us a scrub congress; let our sentence be that he shall be called a scrub Quaker."

The crowd's humor suddenly changed and it burst into a loud laugh. They took Jackson away to make a ceremony of dubbing him with the epithet and, to show that he bore no ill will, he produced a bucket of whiskey and water for his captors.

But the good humor of the observers was lost when the report of the conference committee was read. So loud were the murmurs that the moderates hastily moved an adjournment until the next day. The next morning Galatin addressed the committee at length in favor of submission and Brackenridge and others supported him. David Bradford then rose and made a harangue in favor of open resistance.

"How will we arm ourselves for resistance?" demanded Gallatin.

"We will defeat the first army that comes over the mountains," flashed Bradford, "and take its arms and baggage."

A weather-beaten old Indian fighter leaning on his rifle just outside the circle spat accurately between Bradford's feet.

"No so easy nuther," he drawled.

Gallatin seized the opportunity to move a vote on the recommendation for submission and was met by the objection that the handwriting of the members might be recognized. Gallatin had the solution.

"I will write 'yea' and 'nay' on each of sixty slips of paper and the delegates can tear off and vote whichever they choose. The other," he added with an expression that was as close to a sneer as he ever allowed himself to come, "can be chewed up."

The proposal met with favor and more than one member took the Genevan at his word and solemnly chewed up the unused end of his ballot. There was a portentous suspense as the votes were tallied and an audible sigh of relief when the vote was thirty-four for acceptance as against twenty-three for rejection. Bradford and his friends stormed out of the assemblage. They had played their last card and lost.

September 11 was set by the commissioners for the popular vote on submission. Before that, however, the bitter enders were encouraged by reports of anti-excite riots in Virginia, Maryland, and central Pennsylvania. Tom the Tinker resumed his literary activities with a warning in the *Gazette* that "my hammer is up, and my ladle is hot." There were on the other hand those who had the courage to support submission, especially among the Presbyterian clergy, and the Reverend John McMillan expressed his in-

tention to bar from communion those who did not sign.

The eleventh dawned, a day of confusion and misapprehension, of threats and violence. Those who favored submission were to sign a "solemn promise henceforth to submit to the laws of the United States." Some refused to sign on the ground that their consciences would not permit them to take an oath; others refused simply because of the pioneers' explosive hatred of test oaths, or because they thought that the "henceforth" implied that they had hitherto broken the laws. At many polling places no forms were available. In some places, particularly in Washington County, the polling was accompanied by violence and the papers were seized and destroyed or the conformers intimidated. Yet there were in all of those places evidences of submission and even in the stronghold of the Mingo Democratic Society there were signers. David made a special trip to McKee's Rocks to sign the "solemn promise" but Brackenridge, who had been absent at court in Greensburg, did not put down his signature until the twelfth.

The commissioners met with the meager fruits of the "solemn promise" before them. The majority of the westerners, they reported to President Washington, favored submission but had been intimidated by a violent minority. There was no hope of enforcing the law, they concluded reluctantly, without the help of an army.

And then, ironically, someone made a discovery. The processes, the serving of which had brought on all the trouble, were returnable to Philadelphia on a day when there was to be no court held, and were consequently null and void unless a special session should be called to receive them.

But Hamilton's watermelon army was already mobilizing for its march against the White Indians of the Monongahela.



Chapter 29

NOW THAT THE DIE HAD BEEN CAST AND AN ARMY WAS on the way across the mountains, even the stoutest scoffers were chastened. Dread hovered over the land like a pall; even the brilliantly colored autumn leaves hung listlessly on the trees as if afraid to stir. The birds ceased their songs earlier than was their wont and the squirrels seemed to go about their nutting without the customary chatter.

From every grand jury session, from every political caucus, from every Presbyterian meeting house, came resolutions of unquenchable loyalty to the laws and of abhorrence that anyone should have dared to revolt against them. A second gathering held at Parkinson's Ferry fruitlessly sent emissaries to the president imploring him to accept their assurances of submission and march the troops back to their homes. A town meeting in Pittsburgh recalled the exiles and the action was boldly announced in the *Gazette*. David Bradford was no longer the hero of the West; men crossed the street to avoid speaking to him and the pious muttered in their beards the Biblical phrase, "Dagon is fallen."

From the East with every mail came evidences of a fierce determination to put the "white Indians" in their places. Hamilton published a series of letters that demonstrated to the satisfaction of his worshippers that anyone who criticized the excise or prated of corruption in the administration was not only an enemy to the constitution but to all orderly government. The cry was taken up in the Federalist press from Maine to Georgia. Mere repetition

accomplished what reason could not, and the East found itself convinced by the sad proof in the Monongahela country that any criticism of the administration would lead inevitably to violence and treason.

Brackenridge's equivocal actions during the past months furnished a convenient handle by which John Woods and Isaac Craig, acting for the absent Nevilles, could undermine his campaign for election to Congress and even cast the shadow of treason across him. If Woods had hoped to win his own election by these means, he was disappointed. A few days before the election the Presbyterians of Washington County, who had admired Gallatin for his forthright attacks upon the insurgents at Parkinson's Ferry and Brownsville, nominated him and swept him into office. So thorough was the revulsion from the fanaticism of the summer that the absent Presley Neville was elected to the state legislature.

Meanwhile Brackenridge had allowed his campaign to languish. Election at the hands of the insurgents, he felt, would put him in a bad light, but at the same time he had too much pride to withdraw. The accumulated nervous strain of the summer and the added persecution of his political enemies had plunged him into one of his habitual periods of depression, but to David who watched him anxiously his gloom seemed deeper than it ever had been before. Day after day he sat in his inner sanctum with a bottle of whiskey before him and wrote furiously at his littered desk or stared despondently at the fly-specked ceiling. At first Sabina had tried to rally him but he had responded so grumpily to her efforts that she had retired to the kitchen in dudgeon.

After a few days the lawyer's gloom began to be pierced by moments of wild elation. At such times, from behind

the closed doors of the sanctum, there would come bursts of oracular speech as he read favorite passages from his beloved Horace or exulted in the Scotch poets or in the tragedies of Shakespeare. David, listening with halted pen in hand, glimpsed the naked soul of his benefactor steeped in the desolation that had settled over him at the thwarting of his ambitions and striving to identify its emotions with those of the heroic figures of history and literature.

But not a word of all this came from the suffering man until the day before election when David entered the inner office and laid the eastern mail on Brackenridge's desk. He was turning to leave when the lawyer motioned him to a chair and handed him a glass of whiskey. David sipped it slowly while Brackenridge picked up a Philadelphia paper and ran his burning eyes hurriedly over its columns.

"White Indians, Scotch-Irish yahoos, deluded and vicious banditti, malignant vapours of a hydra-headed monster," he read bitterly. "Gad! How our down country brethren love us! Even the eastern Democratic societies have taken alarm and thrown us as a peace offering to the Hamiltonian lions."

He tossed off the whiskey in his glass, poured another drink, and held the amber fluid up to the light.

"David," he said, "you behold a broken man."

"No, Mr. Brackenridge," said David slowly. "This is not the end of the world. There will be other times and other battles."

"Other times and other battles," echoed the lawyer, staring at his whiskey glass as if it contained the secret of the universe. "The same old story over again. Those in high position exploiting the people for gold and power; demagogues like myself—only successful ones—climbing on the shoulders of the people to force their way into the ranks of the gentry; but always the people ground to dust

between the upper and nether millstones. It needs no conjurer to tell why the common people push field shrubbers and stump burners into office, though they may know no more of public affairs than a cow knows of Greek. The natural squeal of a pig is superior to an imitation of it—and Auld Hughie was never one to give a good imitation.”

He lowered the glass to his lips and emptied it as if the whiskey was water.

“*In vino veritas*,” he observed, “though, indeed, it is whiskey I drink, not wine. A pity the ancients did not know our good Scotch-Irish usquebaugh. They might have poetized to better purpose. Take Horace, for example:

For, to the sober, Heaven makes every task more hard
to bear;
And by no other magic than by wine flies carking care.”

He paused and cocked his head while the fumes of the whiskey inspired his wit.

“Ah, I have it!” he said. “Listen to this, David.

My fire runs brisk through all your veins;
You find it at your finger ends:
And but a fool that has no brains,
Would it deny,
That many a time, both wit and sense
I can supply.”

“Very good, sir,” applauded David. “You are becoming a very Burns.”

“Burns, say ye?” flashed Brackenridge. “Aye, a hymn in praise of usquebaugh should be in Scots. How’s this?”

He cocked his head again for a moment, then raised a warning hand.

"Far better than the drink ca'd wine;
Wi' me compar'd 'tis wash for swine
Ae gill is just as guid as nine;
And fills as fu':
It is nae very long sinsyne,
Ye proved it true."

"When you can throw out verse like that, Mr. Brackenridge," said David, "what do political misfortunes matter? Your future is in literature."

But the mood of elation was past and the lawyer shook his head gloomily.

"No, no, David," he replied, "it cannot be. These vast stretches of lonely forest and mountain throttle the muse. Vulcan is our western muse—not Euterpe. If my parents had only remained in Scotia, perhaps—. But why grieve over it. 'Tis too late now.

There's neither Highland man, nor Lallan',
That's here the same;
But finds him scrimpit o' the talen'
He had at hame.

Those of us who knew the old country will never fit in here. It is your generation, David, that must prepare a home for the muses in the New World."

The lawyer poured another glass of whiskey and regarded it reflectively.

"My work is to pave the way for others, to establish a respect in them for law and order, to erect schools where they can learn, and churches where they can worship the guiding spirit of the universe, to carve out of the forest a community to which my children can summon the arts in due time." He paused for a long moment, then added

bitterly, "That is, I thought my mission lay there. I should have read my Horace with greater care.

Now know I, Heaven's strong Lord
Can change high things for low. The proud he breaks,
And lifts the obscure to light. Like bird of prey,
Chance with a whoop turns crowns away,
And, pleased, elsewhither takes."

"But, Mr. Brackenridge," said David, "Horace also has this to say:

A mind well-schooled, hopes when the skies show stern,
When they show kindly, fears a change of states."

"Aye, David, ye're learning," said the lawyer, looking at him gloomily. "Too fast, I fear. I wonder, will you stand the test when it comes any better than I?"

He tossed off the whiskey and set down the glass.

"At least," he said, "I am a free man today." His long, grimy forefinger thrust at the air in David's direction. "The only unqualified slave in Pennsylvania, David," he added weightily, "is a candidate for office the day before election."

Brackenridge looked down his nose thoughtfully. "Not bad," he mused, "not bad. I'll have to remember that for my next volume of *Modern Chivalry*." His mind seemed to leap ahead. "Aye," he said, "they'll roast, they'll burn. Let them do their gloating now. Let them glean laurels from every tree while even my daily bread is bitter aloes. But my turn will come. There will be other times and other battles."

He turned his burning eyes again on David. "The Nevilles," he said, "blame their misfortunes on me and accuse me of having been in the plot to burn Bower Hill. They have so blackened me to the army as the arch traitor of

the rebellion that it has sworn I shall be the first object of vengeance. 'Delenda est Brackenridge,' is the word—Brackenridge must be destroyed—and it is not beyond the realm of possibility that some unprincipled men will perpetrate what they have heard spoken of."

The lawyer sprang from his chair and paced the narrow confines of his office.

"I'll not run away," he cried passionately. "By God, if they assassinate me, it will be in my own house."

"I do not think there is much danger of assassination," said David slowly.

"Why not?"

"Woods has discovered—"

"Discovered what," cut in Brackenridge sneeringly. "The longitude?"

"That you are not within the amnesty. That you did not sign the solemn promise until the twelfth."

"Is that all? That will not do me any harm."

"But, don't you see," persisted David. "It will change the talk from assassination to legal hanging?"

Brackenridge spun on his heel. "By God, you are right! David, we'll make a lawyer of you yet." He took another turn across the room. "This puts a different face on the matter," he said reflectively. "My true course now is neither to court prosecution nor to fear it." He paused by his desk and weighed a sheaf of papers thoughtfully.

"I can do this at least," he said to himself, and turned to David as he folded the papers and bound them with twine. "I have here," he said, "an account of my actions during the present troubles from the beginning to the present, and I want them placed in safe hands to be used in my defense, if the worst comes to the worst. Senator Ross is the man. He may be my political enemy but he will spare no effort to see justice done. He is staying at Ormsby's, I

understand. I want you to take these to him and give them to him directly and tell him what they are. Understand, no one else is to lay a hand on them."

When David returned to the office Brackenridge emerged from his sanctum with the old whimsical expression on his face. He laid on David's table a sheet of paper covered with his small crabbed handwriting.

"The muse smiled on me for a moment while you were gone," he said, "and gave me a parable for my friends, the Nevilles. Here it is." He walked to the outer door and paused with his hand on the latch.

"When Sabina is wounded in spirit," he said, "she finds Balm of Gilead in a new bonnet. I think I'll try her recipe and order me a new coat, one of bright blue, cut in the military mode, since army styles are soon to be the fashion in these parts. Perhaps, at least, I can take courage when I look at myself in the glass."

He went out and David turned to the paper, which was headed "A Parable from the Negaristan." David smiled at the lawyer's penchant for attributing whatever he wrote to obscure sources and read on. "Two travellers passing by a pool, on the side of the road, one of them, missing a foot, fell in. The surface of the pool was some feet beneath the level of the bank, and of itself deep; laying hold of the bank, he struggled to get up, but it was steep, and he could not. His companion, extending himself on his breast, and reclining over the bank of the pool, and reaching down his hands, got hold of the hair of the other, and with some difficulty, extracted him from the pool. But in dragging him against the bank, by some means an eye was injured, so as to lose the sight of it. He conceived himself entitled to damages against his companion, who had thus, without his interference and application, dragged him out. He claimed the sum of 10,000 dinas. The cause came before

the *cadi*, who was puzzled, and laid it before the califf, who was puzzled, and took the opinion of a famous lawyer, Ala Joseph.

"The decision recommended by Ala Joseph was that the injured man should have his election of two things: either to go back to the pool, from which he had been rescued, and take his chance of getting out, or be satisfied with the act of his companion, and the consequence of it, even though an application for assistance had not been made by him, and his consent to be dragged up formally obtained."

Chapter 30

DURING THE LAST WEEK IN OCTOBER THE EASTERN MILITIA under the command of Governor Henry Lee of Virginia descended from the mountains and spread out over the Monongahela country. All vestiges of violence had subsided weeks before, but the army entered into the search for "whiskey boys" with an enthusiasm that was certain to bring results. Two thousand men, among them the intransigent David Bradford, had taken their rifles and war bags and fled westward, but there were plenty left upon whom vengeance could be wreaked.

Patriots were invited to appear before the courts of inquiry and were encouraged to incriminate anyone against whom they held a grudge. The result was a series of amazing miscarriages of justice; the authorities seemed to be bent only on finding scapegoats, regardless of their guilt. The men who had been the most violent of the insurgent leaders were wine and dined by the invading generals and the moderates were shackled back to back and thrown into prison. To have looked at the raising of a liberty pole was more heinous than to have been at the burning of Bower Hill, and some were held, and eventually sent for trial to Philadelphia, apparently for no greater crime than having lived in the region during the insurrection.

The first of the troops to enter Pittsburgh was a detachment of Philadelphia cavalry acting as escort for the exiled General Gibson. Brackenridge, wearing his brave new blue coat, stood with David at the front window watching the horsemen as they passed and saw Gibson look up

with a derisive smile. The lawyer ran his forefinger into his neckcloth and loosened it nervously.

"That smile," he said, "seems to say, 'There lives a fellow that is to be hanged.'"

Presently there was a sounding of bugles from the base of Coal Hill and another troop of cavalry with flying colors appeared momentarily on the other side of the river, riding toward the ford. A few moments later there was an answering thunder of guns from Fort Fayette. Brackenridge's lips moved as he counted the guns.

"Thirteen guns," he said. "Must be a general. They're closing in on us, David."

He stepped into his sanctum and David heard whiskey gurgling from the bottle. The lawyer reappeared and handed a glass to his clerk.

"Here's a hair of the dog that bit us and started all the trouble," he said. "Bottoms up!"

David downed his whiskey, then shook his head and coughed.

"Well, anyhow," he said, "with the army here it ought to be a good year for the hemp growers."

Brackenridge answered with a sickly grin and shut the door of his sanctum. An hour later there was a scream from the living quarters. David, with Brackenridge almost on his coat tails, rushed across the hall and into the dining room and found black Sally flourishing a broom at two men dressed in a strange mixture of civilian clothes and army uniforms. When they saw Brackenridge they stared at him for a moment as if they had seen a ghost, then turned and fled through the kitchen.

"What did they take me for—the devil?" said the lawyer.

"That's not a bad guess, Mr. Brackenridge," said David. "Between the Federalist Party and the Presbyterian church, you've been endowed with horns and a tail."

That night a group of dragoons started out with a rope and the express intention of hanging Brackenridge and were stopped only when Presley Neville and his father-in-law, General Daniel Morgan, rushed out and ordered them to desist—adding the persuasive argument that it would be better to let the law take its course. Outside of that incident, the next few days passed quietly. Governor Lee was at Parkinson's Ferry and there also were Alexander Hamilton and his judicial officers engaged in making investigations. From time to time word arrived of their activities. The Nevilles and Gurdon Thorne were with them, marshaling testimony and witnesses, it was said, with the main object of ensnaring Brackenridge. To a countryman who came to him for legal advice as to how to extricate himself from the accusation of treason Brackenridge characteristically answered:

"Join the cry against me. Contrive to let one of my enemies hear you curse me and say you had voted against me at the election. To be my enemy constitutes you in their eyes a friend of the government."

A few days later word came from the client that he had followed the advice and the charges had been dropped.

At the end of the first week in November, Senator Ross arrived in Pittsburgh with Gurdon Thorne and John Penburne, special examiner for the attorney general. The senator was soon closeted with Brackenridge, telling him that the tide was beginning to turn in his favor. The most damaging bit of evidence that had been found against the Pittsburgher was a letter he had written to Bradford, which had been picked up in a tavern. It concerned certain papers that Brackenridge had lost and asked that duplicates be sent in order to enable "the business" to go on. Alexander Hamilton had laid the letter before Ross in the presence of

the examiners and the men who were eager to prove Brackenridge guilty of treason.

"What do you make of that?" he said. "You have averred that Brackenridge has had no correspondence with Bradford; is this not the handwriting of Brackenridge?"

The senator had looked the letter over carefully while the examiners waited. Brackenridge's crabbed handwriting was unmistakable.

"It is the handwriting," Ross had answered finally. "There is only this small matter discernible in the case, that it is addressed to William Bradford, attorney general of the United States, not to David Bradford."

There was an embarrassed silence, which Hamilton was the first to break.

"Gentlemen," he said acidulously, "you are too fast; this will not do."

This occurrence, observed Ross, showed that Hamilton was desirous of doing Brackenridge justice. There was more talk, all of an encouraging tenor, save for one statement made by Ross as he was leaving. When he had gone, Brackenridge left his sanctum and bent over David's table.

"David," he said, "I understand that you are one of those whom it is proposed to investigate here in Pittsburgh."

"I have been expecting it," said David quietly. "Captain Thorne?"

"Why, yes," said Brackenridge in surprise. "How did you know?"

"I made an enemy of him the first day I saw him," answered David. "He nearly drove over Grandfather Braddee and I offered to slit his gullet. When we parted on Allegheny Mountain he took satisfaction in threatening me with hanging when he returned."

"Well," said Brackenridge, "whatever you do, tell the truth. It's so much easier to remember—and you have

nothing to hide. I'll do what I can for you, though it may not be much since I am a suspect myself."

Half an hour later a dragoon led David into the private dining room of Ormsby's tavern, which Mr. Penburne was using for an office. The examiner was a sandy-haired, youngish-looking man who had been born and reared in the Monongahela country but had moved to Philadelphia at the close of the Revolution. There was nothing distinctive about the man at first glance, unless it was the harried frown that rested on his face and that may have been caused either by anxiety or preoccupation. Certain it was that he had no relish for the task that he was performing in the West, but he was politician enough to realize that it must be done.

David stood before the table while the examiner asked questions and took notes.

"Your name?"

"David Braddee."

A pause, and David waited for the inevitable query as to whether he was any kin to Sam Brady. It did not come.

"What is your father's name?"

"Matthew Braddee."

"Matt Braddee!" exclaimed Mr. Penburne. "I once knew him well. Perhaps you have heard him speak of John Penburne."

David nodded silently. So this was the great Jack Penburne who had once been the savior of the Monongahela country! Not a man a person would look at twice in a crowd, thought David. He must have changed a lot since he had gone in for politics and land speculation. Perhaps Old Tom was right about the woods being the only place to live. Certainly there was a vitality about the woodsmen that townsmen lacked. David was suddenly conscious of

a violent dislike for the quiet man who was studying him with patently friendly eyes.

"Where is Matt now?" asked the examiner.

"At Fort Washington, boating for the army."

"A boatman, eh? And whatever became of George Pancake?"

"He's with Dad."

"Fine men, both of them," said Mr. Penburne reminiscently.

A surge of anger swept over David. It was bad enough to stand here like a culprit before a judge without having his family patronized by a down country aristocrat. He wanted to reach across the table and wipe that hateful smirk from the examiner's face. His face flushed and his teeth closed with a snap.

"Get on with your questions," he burst forth savagely.

The examiner jerked upright with a start. Of course the lad would resent being questioned, he reminded himself. Any boy with the blood of Old Tom Braddee in his veins should.

"I beg your pardon," said Mr. Penburne stiffly. "I shall try to stick to business. What is your age?"

"Twenty-one."

"Your occupation?"

"Student in the Pittsburgh Academy and clerk to Mr. Brackenridge."

"Any dependents?"

"None."

The examiner tapped a paper that lay on the desk before him.

"David," he said, "I have here a list of charges made against you. I shall give you an opportunity to answer them in order. First, you are said to have been prominent

in the raising of a liberty pole here in Pittsburgh about a year and a half ago."

"I was," answered David.

The examiner looked disappointed, but he made a notation of the answer and continued.

"You have always been an outspoken enemy of the excise?"

"Along with about seventy-five thousand other people in these parts." David's grin was not a pleasant one and the examiner hastily dropped his eyes to his paper.

"You have been accused of having made the statement in a public debate that Secretary Hamilton had issued processes returnable to Philadelphia under the old law, with the purpose of stirring up opposition in the West in order to enable the government to enhance its prestige by the use of military force."

"I said that the government was determined to treat the unregistered distillers with all the severity it could command."

"You deny the allegation?"

"Yes."

"Hm! Were you at Braddock's Field?"

"Yes."

"Were you a delegate to the congress at Parkinson's Ferry?"

"I was."

"That is all so far as concerns yourself, David, though I must warn you that this record is black. However, I will dismiss you if you will give satisfactory answers to certain other questions. You said, I believe, that you are clerk to Mr. Brackenridge."

"Yes."

"Has Mr. Brackenridge in your hearing ever expressed views treasonable to the United States?"

"Emphatically, no!"

"You seem very sure, young man. Did you not hear him at the Mingo meeting cast ridicule upon the president of the United States?"

"I was not at the Mingo meeting."

"Then did you hear about such ridicule?"

"No."

"David, do you realize that in treason there are no accessories after the fact, but that all are equally guilty with the principal?"

"Yes, I know it. But is it treason to ridicule the executive?"

"I am doing the questioning and you will please to give direct answers. Did you know that Mr. Brackenridge was privy to the plan to burn Bower Hill?"

"I did not know it, and I do not believe it."

"Did you know that it was he who laid the plan to rob the mail and bring about the exile of his personal enemies?"

"How could he be expected to know what these men would write in their letters?" countered David.

"Answer the question."

"No, I did not know it and I do not believe it."

John Penburne poured a glass of wine from a decanter that stood on his table and sipped it slowly.

"I think," he said, "that I'll give you an hour to refresh your memory." He rang a small bell and an orderly opened the door. "Put the witness in the guardhouse until I send for him again," said the examiner.

David was thrust into a cow stable behind the inn, together with another prisoner, and two soldiers walked guard. An hour or so later and well after dark, the orderly took him back to Mr. Penburne's office. If the examiner had hoped that the boy's anger would cool upon reflection he

was disappointed, for a cold hatred had taken the place of his first hot rage.

"Well, David," said the examiner, "has your memory improved?"

"Try me," replied David laconically. Mr. Penburne seemed to miss the sharp edge of the reply as he cast an eye over his notes.

"Let me ask again—did you know that Mr. Brackenridge was privy to the burning of Bower Hill?"

"I did not know it, and I do not believe it."

The inquisitor looked up sharply. "Were you," he asked, "in a position to know what Mr. Brackenridge thought with regard to the movement against the excise?"

"I was."

"Then you knew that he abetted violent measures from the first?"

"He did not," said David sharply. "On one occasion when I compared our western grievances to those of the colonies in '75 he took issue with me and convinced me that I was wrong."

"A very subtle man."

"Subtle because he upheld the laws?"

"See here, young man, you are not doing yourself any good with your saucy replies. Let us have the truth, and a little respect mingled with it."

David's answer was a coldly deliberate insult. "It is sufficient," he said, "that I have been telling you the *truth*."

The examiner half rose in his seat, then dropped back and rang the bell.

"Release the witness," he said shortly to the orderly.

David left the room and John Penburne sat for a moment in a brown study gnawing the feather end of his quill. Presently he drew from his drawer a paper headed "List of Prisoners to Be Taken in Pittsburgh."

"The public must have its scapegoats," he mused. "Not enough evidence to convict him—ought to be out by spring. And the young whippersnapper would profit by a few months in jail. It might teach him some manners."

He rang the bell decisively, then dipped his quill in the ink pot and wrote "David Braddee" at the bottom of his list. The orderly stood before him.

"Ask Captain Thorne to come in," he said.

A few moments later the prothonotary strolled in from the taproom. The inquisitor waved him to a seat.

"Captain Thorne," he said, "I am afraid your view that we would get testimony against Mr. Brackenridge from David Braddee was ill-founded. However, at Secretary Hamilton's request *and at your instigation*"—he looked the prothonotary in the eye as he pronounced the words deliberately—"I shall at the proper time have the boy arrested and sent to Philadelphia."

"That is something, at any rate," commented Thorne coolly.

The examiner dropped his eyes and withheld a reply. He had no stomach left for argument, especially after what he had just done, an action that he knew he would do over and over until the quota was full. Thorne went out and Mr. Penburne hastily gulped a glass of wine. He felt like getting drunk. Ten days of this cursed inquisitioning, listening to men with private grudges to sate, trying to gather and at the same time to escape from gathering evidence against the real culprits, and compromising with the public demand for vengeance by marking for arrest the men who were sure to be acquitted. The surprise and hurt in the eyes of those innocent victims of official necessity haunted him, and it had not been so long since he had carried a musket in a rebellion that he had forgotten how to admire them for their honesty and independence. Some-

where in this western country might be his own twin sons who had been stolen by the Indians as tiny lads. They would be young men of nineteen now, if they still lived; one of them had been light haired—and his name had been David, too. Perhaps at this moment that other David was standing somewhere before a federal examiner. John Penburne's face was suddenly haggard. For a moment he was of half a mind to strike David Braddee's name from the list because of his old friendship with Matt, but he fought the impulse down. He could not bring himself to play favorites even to save the son of Matt Braddee. He refilled his glass, set the decanter of port close to the edge of the table, and slid down in his chair to a comfortable position. By God, he was going to get drunk for once. That was one mark of self-respect that Hamilton couldn't deny him.

* * * * *

Captain Thorne jerked his arm free of a clutching hand and cursed.

"It's me, massa—Buttercup," said a voice out of the shadow.

"Well, what the devil do you mean by grabbing at me out of the dark?" spat the prothonotary.

"Fo'gib me, massa. I hadda see yo'."

"Well, what do you want."

"Ah's gwine hab a baby, massa. Yo' baby."

"The hell you say!" shot back the man. This was awkward. Down country nothing would have been thought of the matter, but here in Pittsburgh people were different. He couldn't afford to have it known—at least not just now. He swung on the trembling girl. "Does Mrs. Thorne know?"

"I fink not. Nobuddy know but Buttercup."

"How far are you gone?"

"'Bout fo'—five month, suh."

"Hm." He thought rapidly. "We'll have to send you to the country for a while. You'd like that, wouldn't you?"

"Yes, suh."

"Do you know Mr. Culver at Vance Fort?"

"No, suh."

"Well, he's a good friend of mine, a bachelor. Lives about ten miles down the Ohio. You'd have a good time with him. He has other gals there, too."

"I'd lak dat, suh."

"Well, you go home now and I'll try to find some one to take you down there tomorrow. I'll just tell people I hired you out to Mr. Culver for a few months."

The girl obediently started for home and Thorne turned toward the river. It should be easy to find someone among the army contractors who was willing to take a chance with the state law in return for a quick turnover and a neat profit—and the free use of the goods in the meantime.

Chapter 31

DAVID LOOKED UP FROM HIS COPYING WITH A START AS a tap sounded on the rain-streaked window in front of his table. A hand reached out of the darkness and beckoned to him, but strain his eyes as he might he could see no more than a dark shadow behind it. Then suddenly a wavering ghostly face appeared just outside of the dripping panes. It was Starr.

David dropped a tin cylinder over the candle to hide its gleam from passers-by and stepped out of the office into the storm. Starr was wearing a heavy cloak and hood and was clinging to the side of the house, trying to shelter herself from the rain.

"I had to see you, David," she said. "They are making the arrests tonight all over the Monongahela country—and you are on the list."

"I am? Why, Mr. Penburne let me go scot-free."

"But your name is on the list. Gurdon told me last night—when he was drunk."

"Why didn't you let me know before?"

"I tried to, but you weren't in the office. Tonight I made up my mind that I would go into the house if I had to. I couldn't get away until now. Gurdon took longer than usual to drink himself to sleep."

"You could have written me a note."

"I—I didn't dare."

"Do you know at what time they make the arrests?"

"At two o'clock."

"That means I haven't much time," said David. "Less than an hour. The question is, should I try to escape?"

"You must, David. They'll take you to prison in Philadelphia if you don't. I'd rather you went West, even if I never saw you again."

"I'd be back," David assured her. "Mr. Brackenridge says there will be an amnesty."

"Then you must go—now."

"No," replied David slowly. "I couldn't get fifteen miles on the way before the cavalry would overhaul me. They'll have all the roads patrolled."

"Isn't there some place at the Rocks where you could hide?"

"That's just where they'll look first."

"But there must be some place, David."

"I have it, Starr—the very place. They won't find me unless they set the whole army to looking. It's in—"

"Don't tell me, David," she warned.

"You're right, dear. If you don't know, you can't be forced to let it out."

"You must go now, David. You've no time to lose."

David bent and kissed the girl's eyes and lips. They were salty where the tears had welled over and run down her cheeks.

"Now, darling," he said. "You mustn't cry."

"I th—think the rainwater is salty," she answered, with a pathetic attempt to be whimsical.

David smiled, a little forlornly. "That's my brave little girl," he said, then went on. "I'll have to go West just as soon as they stop looking for me. Will you go with me?"

The girl clung to him and strove to hold back her sobs. "Y—yes, David," she said. "Whenever you come for me."

David kissed her again and tore himself away. There was so much to be done and so little time to do it. He

watched the forlorn figure of the girl disappear into the rain, then entered the office and picked up the candle and started for the attic. It was the work of only a few minutes to change to his trousers and old hunting shirt and to stuff his white hunting shirt and a few necessities in his war bag. For a moment he hesitated as to whether he should write the Brackenridges an explanatory note, but decided against it. He picked up his belt with tomahawk and hunting knife fastened to it and drew it about his waist. As he tightened the buckle his eyes fell upon the Bible that Daniel Strong had given him and he slipped it into his bosom. Next he rolled up the blankets from his bed and tied the ends together with a rope. The resulting pack was slipped over his head and shoulder and left his arms free for carrying.

The next task was to lay in a store of food. He took up his rifle and powder horn and crept quietly down the stairs, candle in hand. The kitchen cupboard yielded bread, part of a ham, and a quantity of dried apples and peaches—food enough to last for several days. After that he could rob Thomasina's smokehouse and meal barrel, if necessary. He quickly thrust his provisions and a supply of candles in a bag, took up a small tin lantern, and let himself out the back door. The rain had stopped now but the clouds still blacked out the stars and hid the puddles in the streets.

Getting a boat would be easy enough, but people usually locked up their oars. A sudden thought struck him and he stopped to take a small iron bar from the Brackenridge woodshed. A few minutes later he stood before the ferryman's shanty at the middle ferry and felt the padlock and hasp. Easy as falling off a log. He twisted the bar and the hasp came loose.

"Locks," he muttered, "are for children and honest people."

The oars were standing by the door and he carried them to the river bank. The chain on the skiff came away easily and David threw his plunder on board and pushed off.

On the opposite side of the Monongahela he pulled the boat far up on shore near the Washington Road. That would indicate to the over-cute watermelon soldiers that he had fled West, and they would follow the trail in full cry. Meanwhile he would be showing them that western boys were not as simple as they thought.

David shouldered his paraphernalia and trudged up the Washington Road. Halfway up he stopped to rest and turned to look at the village below. Faintly through the mist came the challenges of watchdogs and half a dozen blots of flame wavered murkily through the streets. That would be the soldiers making the arrests. David grinned to himself and resumed the climb.

At the top of the hill he turned north and worked around the lip of a hollow to the bluff that rose almost sheer above the river. The rain had changed to a slushy snow that completely hid the village and river from view, but David walked with a sure step. Somehow he didn't feel as if he was running for his life. He hadn't told Starr about it, but Mr. Brackenridge had been convinced, rightly or wrongly, that the government would hang some of those it caught as an example to traitors. With Prothonotary Thorne against him, reasoned David, he might well have been one of the victims.

Still, he didn't feel hunted; he merely felt exhilarated, as he had when he had gone off on his first trip on the "Elzie" or when he had started on the long voyage to New Orleans. Come to think of it now, perhaps he had stuck too closely to his books during the last year and a half. Of course, there had been the excitement of the insurrection, but somehow he had never been able to see it as a personal

experience; no matter what the insurgents might do to Pittsburgh he had never thought of it as affecting his own fortunes, save perhaps as it might affect Starr or the Brackenridges.

He stopped abruptly and looked around. This should be the place, about opposite the Point. Yes, that hazel bush was familiar. David walked past it to the edge of the bluff and found the top of the path he sought. Laden as he was, the going would be dangerous on the slippery trail and he gave his full attention to the business. Foot by foot, clinging to bushes and branches of trees and digging his brogans into the clay, he worked his way down, back and forth across the face of the cliff, while the rain beat in his face and the wind strove to tumble him into the abyss.

It seemed to be hours before the path suddenly widened and he found himself standing on a ledge not more than ten feet square with a cavern yawning at his left in the side of the hill. This would have to do for the present, David decided, and he made his way cautiously into the mouth of the mine. Just out of reach of the rain he put down his plunder and arranged a seat against the wall.

Out there in the storm, he reflected, all over the Monongahela country, the troops were making arrests. He had heard from his elders how the military treated prisoners and he seemed to see long files of men, each tied to a horseman's stirrup, stumbling in the dark along the muddy roads and splashing through the swollen streams. Some of them would be men unused to hardship, or perhaps old and feeble, like his grandfather. David felt his veneer of respect for government cracking. Perhaps they'd get him yet and march him off to Philadelphia. Well, it wouldn't matter so much. He was young and supple and could stand a lot, but by God, they'd better not try to do anything to Old Tom. David was conscious once more of the bond between him and the

old man—they might have been blood kin, he thought. Either of them would stand up and spit in the eye of the world and tell it to go to hell. But though Old Tom didn't know it, he was past killing his own snakes. Somebody else would have to do it for him from now on.

David came slowly out of his dreams and saw that the bleak dawn was peeping into the mine. He was up immediately and hanging his plunder about him. The miners would be coming up the bluff as soon as the sun showed over Quarry Hill and it behooved him to find a mine that had been abandoned.

A short search revealed such a mine, and from the growth of hazel and blackberries around its mouth David judged that it would not be very conspicuous from below. A convenient shelf of rock within sloped toward the back and furnished a dry perch where he could unroll his blankets and spread out his plunder. There he could lie concealed, while if he cared to look out across the town he could do so without more than the top of his head being visible even to an observer standing just outside.

The rain had stopped, and the clouds were scudding away before a wind that promised clear, cold weather. The village stood out across the river with startling distinctness and David could make out the identity of the larger houses. He chuckled as he saw a man saunter down to the middle ferry shanty, then run back up the bank. A little later several dragoons appeared at the lower ferry and were taken across. Part of them turned downstream toward the Rocks and the others went upstream. The latter party found the skiff David had placed so conspicuously, then rode rapidly out of sight in the direction of the Washington Road.

Several men clambered up a steep path to a mine that was out of David's sight, but presently there came the thunder of coal tumbling down a wooden chute. It fell in a heap on

a narrow ledge and a grimy man, at great peril of life and limb, shoveled it into a second chute that carried it downhill at an acute angle to the chute above. Below him another man shoveled the coal into a third chute that carried it out of sight at still another angle. Some day, thought David idly, someone would build a chute with curves in it and save the wages of two men. But at that, the zigzagging chutes were better than the old system of loading the coal into leather bags and tumbling it over the hill.

The day passed drearily between sleep and watching. The sight of the grimy chute men lost its interest, and the town was scarcely a more edifying sight. In this extremity David remembered Daniel Strong's Bible and fished it out of the niche in the rock where it had been stowed. It occurred to him that of the thousands of pages he had read during the last year and a half very few had been in the Bible. Not that he had avoided it, for he was conscious that there were some mighty fine passages of literature in it and he had listened to them with interest during school devotions. Perhaps, he reflected, he had never tackled it because of the fact that Old Tom seemed to draw from it the inspirations for his maunderings.

David ruffled the pages idly until his eye caught his own name. The Israelitish king, of course. He glanced rapidly down the page and read the incident of how David, in the cave of En-gedi, had cut off the skirt of Saul's robe. He read on avidly. Almost before he knew it, the afternoon was gone and it was too dark to read. David dug his flint and steel from his war bag, lit the candle in his lantern, and retreated farther into the mine. There he read through the hours, grudging even the time necessary to trim the wick, until, with a futile sputter, the light went out. He groped his way to his blankets and lay down, but not to sleep. Through his mind marched a great procession of



kings, and prophets, and heroes, and among them, strangely out of place in the robed throng and yet with a voice that rose above them all, walked Daniel Strong.

* * * * *

Gurdon Thorne's heavy step shook the house as he stumbled up the stairway. Starr cowered under the bedclothes, stiff with terror, yet counting, each in its own eternity, those fumbling, inexorable steps. The latch clicked, and the door swung open with a protesting rasp. The half-drunken man walked unsteadily to the bed. Starr felt his bleary eyes upon her, boring through her skull, like a gimlet through a plank, piercing her brain with a grinding, unspeakable agony. She could stand it no longer, she must open her eyes if she died for it. She looked up at him with eyeballs glazed with fear.

"You whore!" the man said. "Get up!"

Starr struggled to throw aside the coverlets: they might have been iron for all the effect her frozen fingers had. Thorne tossed them roughly aside and placed his candle on the chest of drawers. He was holding a rope in his hand and for a moment Starr thought he meant to strangle her. She opened her mouth to scream, but no sound came. Instead, a handkerchief was thrust into her mouth and Thorne began wrapping the rope around her, tossing her about as if she were a doll. He stood up and tugged at the bonds. They were so tight that they would have cut her flesh had she not been wearing a heavy woolen bedgown.

"You've had your fun at my expense while I was away," said Thorne, "and helped your lover to get off scot-free. Now it's my turn."

He picked up the girl and half carried, half dragged her to the closet and dropped her inside on the floor.

"I'll close the door, my dear," he said, "but your ears will tell you all that happens."

Starr heard him clump down the stairs, then presently come back up and close the rasping door. She must have fainted then, for the next sound seemed to come a long time afterward. It was a loud ringing in her ears, and through it came the thud, thud, thud of her heart as it struggled to send the blood through her straitened, numbed limbs. Or was it her heart? It was too slow and rustling, and somehow it seemed to come from outside the closet. She turned her ear toward the door and held her breath. Then, above the sound of the ringing in her head, she heard Buttercup's pert giggle—and knew.

* * * * *

Thorne lifted his wife to the bed and cut the ropes one by one with his Barlow knife.

"Just in case you want to run to Lawyer Woods," he said academically as he pulled the handkerchief from her mouth, "let me remind you that in treason there are no accessories after the fact; all are principals."

In the gray light of dawn Buttercup climbed aboard the flatboat and handed its shock-headed patroon a folded paper. The man glanced hastily over the paper and grinned.

"We'll have a sure 'nuf good time, gal," he said, noting with approval that her figure was as yet unspoiled. "You'd best stay in the cabin till we're past the town," he said. "Folks might see you." He took her bundle with a courtesy unusual in a white man, and opening the door of the cargo-box pointed to a pile of sacks heaped over the cargo.

"I'll call you when we get to Vance Fort," he leered, and closed the door.

The next moment she felt the bottom of the boat grate gently on the mud as the crew pushed it away from the

bank. The water gurgled lazily past and the sweeps creaked in the locks as the men worked into the stream. Through a crack in the cabin wall she could see the gray shadows of Pittsburgh and the herald rays of the sun rising over Quarry Hill.

She awoke with a start that bumped her head on the deck. She suddenly felt shut in. It would do her good to get outside and walk on the deck, where she could see the rising sun and the river. She rolled over and pushed against the door. It refused to yield. She pushed again, fruitlessly. Panic seized her, but she knew better than to pound the door and shout—that would only have brought down on her the anger of her new master. Instead she buried her face in the sacks and sobbed. She knew now that there was no Mr. Culver at Vance Fort. She had become another in that great throng of slaves who went down river, never to return.



Chapter 32

THE BRACKENRIDGE HOME HAD BECOME THE HEADQUARTERS of the army of occupation. Across Sabina's handsome rugs stalked the muddy boots of contemptuous staff officers, and the polished surfaces of her well kept furniture bore the scratches of pistols and sabers flung down with deliberate carelessness. For the officers of General Lee's staff resented being forced to do their work in the home of the archtraitor. Was the fact that the legal Beelzebub of the West had once been tutor to their general sufficient ground for selecting his home to live in? Why, the respectable gentlemen of the town refused to enter the house, and, aside from the point that it hampered military business, who could blame them?

The family had been crowded into one upstairs room to make way for the general and his staff. The Brackenridge cook now labored for the military; the family ate in the kitchen while the staff messed in style in the dining room. Brackenridge had been invited to dine with the general, it was true, but one meal in that polar atmosphere had made him glad to retreat to the kitchen. The parlor had become the general's office, and the orderlies congregated in the hall or on the porch. And the sanctum! The sanctum had become the inquisition chamber of that author of all western ills—Mr. Secretary Alexander Hamilton.

On the table that had once been David's were scattered the papers of Mr. Hamilton's military aide. Special Examiner John Penburne was striding nervously up and down the length of the chamber, his head bowed and his hands

clasped behind his back. The door of the sanctum opened and the aide stood on the threshold.

"Mr. Hamilton will see you now," he said.

Alexander Hamilton was seated at Brackenridge's desk and the order that now prevailed there as contrasted to the Pittsburgher's habitual slovenliness marked the difference between the two men. Hamilton was a slightly built man with long chin, thin lips, humped nose, and puffs of flesh above the eyes; not unhandsome, it was true, but with a look of self-satisfaction that fell short of smugness only because of the imperiousness of his eyes. As befitted his task in this outpost of civilization he wore a plain blue coat of semimilitary cut. There was no lace at his wrists, but his neckcloth was of the finest French lawn and puffed in genteel folds above his canary-colored waistcoat.

Hamilton waved his visitor to a chair and glanced at a paper that Penburne had handed him.

"The final list of those to be sent to Philadelphia," said the examiner. "It has just come to light that of the sixteen men arrested in Pittsburgh, nearly half were not accused, but were intended to be held as material witnesses. I must take on my own shoulders the responsibility for the stupid blunder. I did not, however, reckon upon the over-zealousness—I might be excused for saying brutality—of the military. The prisoners were taken away in such haste that they were not even given time to put on their shoes, and were driven at a trot by a troop of horses through the slush and mud to a point seven miles out of Pittsburgh. A little later they were driven back toward town and thrust into an open pen where they were denied blankets and even driven by bayonets from the fire. Several of them are now ill in the hospital of Fort Pitt."

The secretary waved his hand in a deprecatory gesture. "I am not anxious," he said, "to see any of these men go to

the scaffold, but a little rough handling will teach them a salutary lesson."

"You know your own policy best, Mr. Hamilton," said Penburne, "but I must confess that I have had little stomach for the task you have assigned me. These people were my friends; a dozen years ago I stood in a very close relationship to them, and my heart has ached at the necessity of bundling them off to prison."

The secretary smiled. "I have heard," he said, "that girls with pads under their clothing to simulate pregnancy have wheedled you into letting their husbands or sweethearts go."

Penburne's answering smile gave his undistinguished countenance an expression of vitality and charm, and it suddenly dawned on Hamilton that he had chosen the man for the job because of that smile—not for his wealth or respectability.

"I have been aware of the deception, Mr. Hamilton," said Penburne, "but the writ *de ventre inspiciendo* can issue only from a court. Between the two of us, I have been glad of an excuse to release the poor devils."

Hamilton shook his head and frowned slightly. The special examiner, he reflected, was too soft-hearted for his task. But then, that had been evident from the first and he had been chosen ostensibly because of his knowledge of the West and because even the eastern democrats trusted him implicitly.

"Only one person escaped of those listed for arrest," Penburne was saying. "I was rather glad of that, though. The lad's father was well known to me."

Hamilton stirred. "David Braddee?" he said. "It is supposed that he went down river or into the territory. At any rate, he's gone where we're not likely to apprehend him."

There was a pause. Penburne cleared his throat. "Mr.

Secretary," he said, "now that my task is completed I must ask you to relieve me from further duty and allow me to return to Philadelphia. To tell the truth I am ill at ease here. I never thought to return to my birthplace in such a capacity, and though my old friends say nothing, yet there is a stiffness toward me that I would wish to escape."

"Very well, Mr. Penburne," replied Hamilton. "You may leave at your convenience. When I return to the capitol you may expect in writing some expression of my appreciation and of the president's for the services you have rendered."

As Penburne emerged from the sanctum he saw Brackenridge standing in the outer office gazing moodily from a window. The two had known each other well during the latter years of the Revolution, and Penburne now advanced with outstretched hand.

"Mr. Brackenridge," he cried, "I am glad to see you. I was afraid that I would miss you altogether, since I intend to leave for home within the hour."

Brackenridge took the examiner's hand in a flabby grasp.

"It is a pleasure to see you again, Mr. Penburne," he said formally, then added, with his sardonic smile, "though I regret the occasion of your coming."

Penburne flushed. "I hope," he said, "that you understand the circumstances that made it necessary for me to include you within the scope of my inquiries."

"Secretary Hamilton will see you now, Mr. Brackenridge," said the aide.

The lawyer bowed stiffly to Penburne. "If you will excuse me, sir," he said, and went into the sanctum.

Penburne gazed at the lawyer's retreating back. No response had been made to his apology, he reflected. He sighed and walked out of the office. In another hour all this unpleasant mess would be behind him. Or would it? Had

he not rather given himself to a service that would haunt him with vain regrets as long as he lived? He wished with all his heart that he had refused to abandon the retirement of his country estate and left inquisitioning to those equipped with more leathery consciences. Well, it was too late to mend the error now. The past was gone and the future would have to be met as it came.

Hamilton received Brackenridge with a studied politeness that the latter took to indicate distrust.

"Will you be seated, Mr. Brackenridge?" said the secretary. "Such an invitation should scarcely need to be extended to a man in his own office. I deeply regret the necessity which compels me to dispossess you thus."

"The circumstances give ample reason, Mr. Secretary," returned Brackenridge.

Hamilton rustled some papers that lay on his desk, as if uncertain how to begin, while the owner of the desk waited with the spirit of humility and trepidation that so often came over him in periods of despondency. This interview, he was well aware, was the crisis for him, and he would not have risked an old shoe buckle on his chance of avoiding early incarceration in the fort.

"Mr. Brackenridge," said the secretary at last, "your clerk, David Braddee, was on the list for arrest but in some manner learned of the fact in time to escape. For purposes of record, may I ask if you were aware of his impending arrest or of his intention to escape?"

"I was not aware of either," replied Brackenridge.

"I had assumed as much," said Hamilton, "and you shall be troubled no more on the subject. I would, however, like to obtain your views on certain matters connected with the origin and progress of the insurrection. For example, do you consider that the insurrection was the result of the

ambitions of certain leaders or a spontaneous movement of the people?"

"I attribute it," replied Brackenridge, "almost wholly to the latter, though it was not stopped in the early stages because certain men were not willing to risk their popularity with the people by making a stand against it."

"I see. Would you say that there was ever a majority of public opinion in this region arrayed against the government in support of violent measures?"

"By no means," said the Pittsburgher. "There was never more than an inconsiderable number in favor of violent measures; the rest were forced to a pretense of conformity through fear."

Hamilton nodded. "Mr. Brackenridge," he said, "I understand that there have not been lacking people to accuse me of having deliberately issued processes returnable to Philadelphia under the old law with the express purpose of stirring up trouble. I must say that the administration deeply resents such accusations of unfairness and is determined to seek out the culprits and punish them. The principal accusation against your clerk was that he had given vent to such sentiments in public."

Brackenridge's countenance had been growing darker as the secretary spoke and now he burst out angrily.

"Mr. Secretary, is there such a crime in the United States as lese majesty?"

Hamilton looked steadily at Brackenridge for a moment, but only his heightened color betrayed his resentment. "I beg your pardon, Mr. Brackenridge," he said, "for forgetting that you belong with the political opposition. Your definition of treason is quite different from mine, which is, shall I say, a little old-fashioned. I shall proceed with my questions."

"Perhaps," suggested Brackenridge in a conciliatory tone,

"I could save your time by giving a consecutive history of the insurrection."

Hamilton nodded. "It is well thought of," he approved. "I can take notes while you talk."

The account had reached the place where, after the burning of Bower Hill, the radicals had forced Bradford and Marshall to support their action, when Hamilton laid down his pen.

"Mr. Brackenridge," he said, "I observe that you have a tendency to excuse the principal actors. Before we go further I must be candid and tell you that you are in a very delicate position: you are not within the amnesty. You did not sign the oath upon the day and the government has you within its power. Your fate depends upon the candor of the account that you give here."

Brackenridge flushed darkly but he answered straightforwardly. "I know that I am not within the amnesty," he said, "and I am sensible of the power of the government. But were the narrative to begin again I would not change a single word."

Brackenridge went on to tell of Presley Neville's visit to his office to urge him to go to the Mingo meeting. At this point the inquiry was adjourned for dinner. When Hamilton returned a little less than two hours later Brackenridge was waiting in his own outer office like a client.

"Mr. Brackenridge," said the secretary, "your conduct has been horribly misrepresented."

The Pittsburgher understood from this that Hamilton had wrung from Presley Neville at dinner the confession that he had asked Brackenridge to go to Mingo. Brackenridge took up his account, but presently Hamilton interrupted him.

"We have testimony, Mr. Brackenridge," he said, "extremely unfavorable to you concerning your words at this

meeting. In particular it is said that you cast ridiculing reflections on the executive. Lese majesty, perhaps," he added with a disarming smile.

"It was to meet just such an eventuality as this," replied Brackenridge, "that I took along witnesses. Why not question them?"

Hamilton nodded. "Your candor is your best defense, Mr. Brackenridge," he said. "Pray, proceed."

When he came to his motion before the town meeting that the militia of Pittsburgh go forth to Braddock's Field, Brackenridge noticed that the secretary had ceased to write and seemed plunged in thought. He resolved to drive the point home.

"I took occasion last summer," he said, "to suggest this to the commissioners and I will repeat it to you. Was this any more than Richard the Second did when the mob assembled on Blackheath, and the young prince put himself at their head and said, 'What do you want, gentlemen? I will lead you on.'"

Presently Brackenridge was dismissed with the request that he return the next morning. Greatly to Sabina's relief General Lee made his apologies in the morning and moved to a less central part of town "for the sake of retirement." Brackenridge commented cynically to his wife that the move was made because certain individuals refused to enter his tainted portals.

"Well, treason has its uses," replied Sabina, ruefully inspecting her living rooms. "If they hadn't thought you a Benedict Arnold those barn yard heroes might have stayed around until they had completely ruined my rugs and furniture."

Brackenridge spent an hour in completing his account of the insurrection. When he had finished, Hamilton, to his surprise, completely exonerated him.

"I would not conceal from you," said the secretary, "that you have unscrupulous enemies who succeeded in poisoning my mind against you. I am satisfied, however, from your account and from other inquiries, that your conduct was greatly misrepresented and I shall so announce to General Lee, who represents the president. You are no longer in personal danger. As for what may be due to yourself with the public, that is another question."

With those parting words to dampen his relief Brackenridge departed to find Sabina. The next morning he mustered up all his courage and ventured from the house in his coat of martial blue. He was not, he observed, an object of encomium. Both the common people and the gentlemen of respectability passed with a cold nod or without any sign of recognition, and a chill ran down his spine as he observed groups of soldiers looking him over with a blend of curiosity and hostility.

At the foot of Liberty Street a ferry flat was approaching the shore carrying a squad of dragoons. As it came closer Brackenridge saw that an old man with shaggy white hair and beard was tied to the stirrup of one of the horsemen. The flat landed and the dragoons ascended the depression in the bank with the old man laboring at the side of his guard's horse. It was Old Tom Braddee, striving valiantly to hold himself erect and dauntless before the crowd, though it seemed that every muscle in his body ached with the strain and his eyes were blurred with a mist that hid the frozen clods that lay in wait to trip him. Once he stumbled and a soldier in the crowd hooted derisively.

Old Tom recovered and drew himself erect again. He'd show this riff-raff that a woodsman, even if he was past eighty, knew how to take misfortune. He looked around him and tried to make out the old familiar landmarks

through the mist that blinded him. Man and boy, he had known this spot for seventy years. The first time he had seen it was when him and his daddy had brung the first packtrain over the mountings. He was so small then, he recalled, that he could skurce cock his legs across the saddle. Nothing but a tangle of trees and brush and snake-infested ponds then.

Well, he had seen that begin to change when William Trent had built Fort Prince George not a spit toss from here. That was just forty year ago now. He seemed to see again the French marines drawn up behind their brass cannon while a white-coated officer looked at his watch and gave the little English garrison an hour to decide on surrender. Tom remembered how, a few minutes later, when they had caught the Half King stealing a drink from the last keg of rum, the old rascal had tried to explain that he just wanted to save them the trouble of carrying it back across the mountings. The laugh had done them good, he remembered. Sort of broke the spell of terror. That had been a sad day for England, sure enough, but not for Tom. He was young then, and could kill his own snakes.

Yes, he had been a prisoner here after Braddock's defeat, and Dick Penburne had snatched him almost from the stake. And then there was the times when he had been a scout out of Fort Pitt, first for the British and then for the Americans. He must have stood just about on this spot during the siege in '63 when he had took a shot at Guyasuta himself, the head sachem of the redsticks. Three years later he had gone on a winter hunt with Guyasuta and slept every night with his daughter.

Old Tom felt the fire die out of him. What was the use! Men warn't like they used to be, or they'd have taken their

long rifles and picked off them stable boys and counter jumpers one by one. He reckoned maybe the Monongahela country desarved to have the axcise crammed down its neck. Anyhow he'd done his best, preaching the sword of the Lord and of Gideon. He was about done up. It was all right ter think of the old days, but they was gone now, taking his youth and courage with them.

He stumbled again and scraped his knees on the frozen ground. The guard swung his foot back and there was a cruel wrench at Old Tom's wrist, but the guard had him by the scruff of his hunting shirt and was hauling him to his feet. The sergeant cursed the old man for falling and the soldier for helping him up. Tom had half a mind to show the sergeant some real cussing, but decided not to. Anyhow he felt better. It did him good to get mad. Maybe he couldn't kill his own snakes, but by the great fire of Onondaga he wasn't going to let these milksops see a woodsman give up. His shoulders straightened once more and his white beard was cocked at a defiant angle as he stepped out proudly along the rutted highway. The French, he recalled with a superstitious twinge, had called it the *Allée de la Vierge* because it had led to the cemetery. Well, perhaps it would lead to the grave for him. He sort of hoped it did. Life was over for him anyhow when he couldn't kill his own snakes no longer.

Brackenridge felt a hand on his arm and turned to see General Wilkins standing beside him. The general nodded in the direction of the little procession.

"We've taken to making war on half-demented old men," he observed sadly, "even after they've signed the amnesty."

"What did he do?" asked the lawyer.

"Do? Nothing."

"But there must be a reason."

"A reason? Oh, yes. He's undoubtedly a great villain. The other day when someone protested against his hunting squirrels in their woods, he remarked that it was a free country 'except for them as 'stilled whiskey.' "

Chapter 33

WHEN BRACKENRIDGE RETURNED HOME HE FOUND Sabina weeping stormily into the plush of her settee while little Alec looked on in wide-eyed wonder. With unaccustomed gentleness the lawyer drew from her the cause of her grief. It seemed that a ball was to be given that night in honor of General Lee and Secretary Hamilton and she had been expressly refused an invitation by Prothonotary Thorne, the manager of the affair.

Brackenridge sank upon the settee beside his wife and took her hand. "My dear," he said, "you read to me from Plutarch the other evening the life of the Athenian Phocion. You remember that after Phocion had rendered great services to the state he was accused of treason by the arts of malignant individuals but acquitted by the people. Suppose that his adversaries had taken their revenge by getting a master of ceremonies to exclude his wife from a ball; would you not think it more honorable to be the wife of Phocion under these circumstances than to be the wife of a common Athenian and to have received a card and been called upon to lead down the first dance?"

Three-year-old Alec gravely offered his mother a table napkin.

"Take my hanky, mother," he said.

Sabina dabbed her eyes with the napkin and smiled at the child's look of concern.

"See," said Brackenridge, "you must learn to be a philosopher like Alec. You never cry, do you, Alec? You're my baby philosopher."

"Yes," answered Alec gravely. "Mother won't cry any more, either. She's going to be a ph'los'pher now."

The ball was in full swing at Marie's Tavern on Grant's Hill, for it had been decided that Mr. Ormsby's assembly room was too small for such an occasion. There were a hundred officers to be accommodated as well as the two score or so of socially acceptable townspeople. The twenty women available were in great demand for the dances and since the ballroom was so constricted that there was little room for a stag line, most of the men periodically sought the taproom.

Captain Thorne, as master of ceremonies, led the first dance with Theodora Woods. Mrs. Thorne, he explained to Theodora, with just the right touch of concern, was unable to attend on account of a slight indisposition. Oh, very slight indeed. In fact, he suspected that the reason was not so much illness as—well, the dear child was embarrassed by crowds.

The dance ended and Captain Thorne elbowed his way through the crush of buff and blue in the taproom. The bar was a tiny affair in one corner of the room and a top-heavy wooden grating hung vertically over it as if about to descend and cut off business at any moment. Thorne ordered whiskey and stood in a corner while he drank it slowly and reflectively.

This was almost like old times during the Revolution, the crush of uniforms, the crowded taproom, the handful of bucktoothed country belles. He sighed and held his glass up to a sconce to let the reflection of the candlelight show through the whiskey. Only life had been so much simpler then, in spite of the war—and he had not yet met whiskey. He was, he felt, a decent enough fellow at the bottom—oh, a little high-spirited and wild, of course, as a gentleman's son should be, but by no means black. He felt

ashamed of himself for the way he had used Starr the other night. Not that he loved her or ever had, but she had brought him a measure of financial independence and he owed her something for that. He owed her at least—he grinned sardonically at his glass—the opportunity he enjoyed of getting drunk and abusing her. He was, he felt, getting harder. He didn't dream as often as he once had that the law had caught up with him, but that didn't mean that he could get careless. Lawyer Woods, he knew, was still suspicious and might not be above giving a hint to Brackenridge if he felt that Starr was being abused. Anyhow Thorne had about decided to take quietly his impending legal defeat at Brackenridge's hands rather than to set that old bloodhound to seeking revenge by sniffing back over the trail into the past.

Thorne finished his whiskey and stared vacantly into the empty glass. His investments were not doing so well, either; in fact, his partners in the iron furnace felt that they would have to abandon the enterprise because it was so expensive to bring ore from a distance. The insurrection had put a stop to the land sales upon which he depended for ready cash and he had managed to meet certain outstanding debts only by his sale of Buttercup at a sacrifice price. In fact, his finances were in a snarl, and his three months of enforced absence had not helped them. Starr's fortune was going fast—perhaps before long he could throw her aside and go on to some new country to start over. The Spanish territory, it was said, held all sorts of opportunities for an enterprising man; if he was willing to turn Catholic he might even make a wealthy marriage.

Starr might be hard to get rid of however; she had been developing a surprising amount of spunk lately and might try to do something about a cavalier dismissal, especially with Lawyer Woods to advise her. And there was young

Braddee—now there was an idea. Perhaps he could get Braddee to take her. She had warned young Braddee of his impending arrest, Thorne had no doubt of that, and according to Buttercup, Braddee had come to Starr's rescue the night that the mob had threatened to burn his house. No doubt the boy would be back as soon as the army was gone. Still, there might be trouble when Braddee learned that Starr's marriage had been bogus. The boy was as proud as Lucifer and might choose rather to make Starr a bona fide widow in the eyes of the world. No, the best course was to wait and say nothing. Sooner or later the two of them would betray themselves and he could then be guided by circumstances.

Young Mr. Bates had danced with Theodora Woods and now he brought her a glass of punch and stood beside her, sipping his own glass. A casual glance would have taken him to be attentive to his partner but Theodora, who was more than ordinarily observant, detected a gleam of sedate amusement in his eyes as he looked out at the blood and beauty of Pittsburgh and the brilliant blue uniforms of the scarcely less blue-blooded army officers. She rapped his fingers lightly with her fan.

"Mr. Bates," she said, "we should at least be grateful to the rebels for the opportunity to entertain so many fine gentlemen at one time."

"By comparison with them," answered Bates as he turned from the bright uniforms, "I feel quite the—the democrat."

Theodora tapped his fingers again, flirtatiously, but there was a line of concern on her forehead. His light tone had not deceived her, for she had heard that he had often met with Mr. Schilling and that Braddee boy in Mr. Brackenridge's office and read Voltaire and Rousseau far into the night. "The democrats," she said anxiously, "are determined to disunite the government. The sentiments they hold are

incongruous with the ruling sentiment of the country—as the outcome of this crisis has shown—and not compatible with the *noblesse oblige* of the gentleman.” She coughed into her fan in some embarrassment, then decided that she might as well go on. “You are a young gentleman of parts, Mr. Bates, and may expect to rise from office to office, if prudence will only dictate your silence.”

Theodora coughed again into her fan. “Please do not misunderstand me. I intend no offense toward your freedom of action—nor is it necessary to give up your principles, so long as you are silent. I speak only as an older woman to a young man who can, if he wishes, have a brilliant future.”

Bates strove to conceal the tell-tale gleam in his eyes as he bowed to Mrs. Woods. “I am mightily honored by your attention,” he said, and his tone was silken smooth. “I shall always keep you in most grateful remembrance for it, and shall endeavor to profit by every syllable.”

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At that moment David was standing by the only lighted window of the Thorne house, peering into the office of the prothonotary. A single candle was burning on the table and Starr was sitting near it sunk into the depths of the great brocaded chair. At David's tap on the window pane Starr sat bolt upright. There was no alarm on her face, only a look of expectancy. David tapped again, but instead of going to the window the girl started for the kitchen. David was at the back door before her.

“I have been expecting you,” Starr said quietly as she closed the door behind him. “I think I know why you have come.”

“You know that grandfather has been arrested?”

“Yes. You are going to give yourself up, David?”

"Someone must look after him if they are taking him to Philadelphia," replied David. "He'd never get across the mountains without help."

"They are sending him tomorrow with the rest of the prisoners. They seem to think that he was to blame for the whole insurrection."

"Then I must go, too."

"David, I'm afraid for you."

"You needn't be, Starr. I'll be back in a few months."

The girl was silent for a moment. "Where have you been, David?"

"In an old mine across the river. This afternoon I thought I saw grandfather being taken to town by some dragoons, so as soon as it was dark I went to McKee's Rocks to find out. Aunt Seena told me also that Captain Thorne was managing a ball for General Lee. I'm glad you didn't go."

"Gurdon thought he was spiting me by leaving me at home," said the girl slowly. "It was all I could do to keep from showing how glad I was."

David bent and kissed the girl's pale hair. "How can you stand to live with him?"

"I have never known what it was to have a real home," she said, "so perhaps I am not so unhappy."

"This will put off our going West, Starr."

"Yes," she said quietly, trying to hold her voice steady. The tears were welling up in her eyes and trickling down her cheeks. "It is so hard to let you go," she said.

"Say the word, Starr, and I'll not," replied David.

"No, if you think it is your duty I wouldn't hold you." She wanted to cry out to him the thousand ways in which her daily life was made a hell, to beg him to take her away before she went mad, but something seemed to hold her back. She had never had anything before and it seemed too much to expect anything now. Men, she had heard, were

an obtuse race and there was no reason why David should be different, just because he had taken a boyish fancy to her. The thought was no sooner formed than she repressed it. He had his problems just as she had hers, only—only he was so much more able to meet them and she did so want to lean on him for support.

It was after midnight when they parted, and the lanterns of the returning revelers were twinkling in the streets of the village.

"I must go," David whispered. "*He* will be back any moment and you must be in bed."

They clung together in a last despairing kiss, as if they were parting at the wall of execution, then David ran from the house, not daring to look back. Starr climbed the stairs slowly with a great numbness clutching at her heart. Nothing that Gurdon could do to her now would matter. She felt that David was passing from her life as certainly as if they had willed never to meet again. Her tears had all been shed and it seemed as if she would never cry again. There was nothing left for her but suffering, the only parent she had ever known, and she clung to it now as the one familiar thing in her life.

When Gurdon Thorne bent unsteadily over the bed, candle in hand, he saw that his wife was asleep. Her face was calm and composed, without even the trace of pathos that had once tugged faintly at his heart. But she was older, he thought, so much older than she had seemed to be even that evening. Strange, too, because sleep usually seemed to turn back the years.

* * * * *

At dawn on Sunday morning, November 25, a wet snow had been falling and thickening the soupy mud of Pittsburgh's streets, but by the time the pious were picking their

way to church a stiff wind had blown away the clouds and formed a scum of rough ice on the slushy mud puddles. In the bare log guardhouse of Fort Fayette sixteen miserable prisoners had tumbled from their straw-filled bunks and huddled around a tiny fire to eat their breakfast cornpone and drink gratefully of the scalding hot bran coffee which each man dipped with his tincup from a huge metal bucket. The prisoners were sorry looking specimens, mud-stained and unshaven. Those who had overcoats were wearing them; the others had their blankets drawn over their shoulders. Some of the men looked as if they had barely been able to arise from sick beds and their hands shook as they drank their coffee.

Old Tom stood with his blanket about his shoulders and gloomily contemplated the prospect of a march to Philadelphia. Twenty years ago, even ten, he would have thought nothing of it, but every step now seemed to remind him that he was past eighty. A long scout like that at his age would likely be the death of him. Well, he didn't mind dying so much. With the world changing like it was he felt that it was high time he went, only he sort of wanted to die alone, like an old wolf, instead of having a lot of degenerate blue-bellies around him. And he couldn't bear to think of dying on the east of the mountains, either. For seventy years, boy and man, the West had been his country—a noble place to live in, and he wanted to die there, not in the wilderness of brick and stone men called Philadelphia. The spirit and even his lungs seemed to feel already the oppressiveness of the city and he half consciously loosened the blanket about his shoulders.

Somewhere outside a bugle blared and horses' hoofs thudded dully on the hard-packed parade ground. A subaltern appeared at the door.

"Get your plunder together and line up outside," he said curtly.

As he turned aside a negro boy approached him deferentially.

"Where kin ah find Majah Butlah, massah?"

"What do you want?"

"Ah's got a note foh him from Cap'n Thorne."

"I'll take care of it."

The lad surrendered the note and the subaltern walked to headquarters. Major Butler read the message and frowned thoughtfully.

"David Braddee has been seen in the town this morning," he said. "Have Lieutenant Repperger take a squad and apprehend him if he can be found. He may be at Mr. Brackenridge's."

The ensign saluted and departed. A detachment of cavalry was drawn up on one side of the court and the prisoners were opposite them, slouching in a ragged line. Lieutenant Repperger and his squad marched briskly from between two barracks buildings just as Major Butler appeared at the door of his quarters. A young man in a white doeskin hunting shirt and with war bag and blanket roll tossed negligently at his feet stood by the door as if waiting.

"There he is now," shouted Repperger suddenly. "Arrest him, men."

David's eyes swept scornfully by the subaltern and rested on Major Butler.

"I've come to surrender," he said quietly.



Chapter 34

THE PRISONERS MARCHED ON FOOT, EACH MAN BETWEEN two horsemen who rode with drawn swords. Orders, it was said, were that if any man tried to escape his head should be cut off and brought to Philadelphia. But there was little inclination on the part of the prisoners to attempt escape.

The march was made at the worst season of the year, before the winter freeze had set in, when the road from Pittsburgh to Philadelphia was a three hundred mile stretch of viscous mud. The effort of pulling their feet at each step from a footing that seemed viciously alive in its determination to hold them wore out the stoutest of the prisoners within the first few miles.

Fortunately for them, the pace of the troops with which they marched was set by the necessity of staying within reach of the provision wagons, so that in no day did they attempt to go more than ten miles. The prisoners might even be said to have had an easier lot than the infantry, for they were not burdened down with equipment but carried little more than their war bags and blankets. At night, moreover, they were usually quartered in barns or cellars where they could be easily guarded, while the troops often had to lie out in the open fields.

Those prisoners who had youth on their side stood the fatigue well, but from the first it was apparent that Old Tom would never reach Philadelphia unaided. After the first day David obtained permission to march with him and help him up the hills, and when they reached Chestnut

Ridge, just east of Greensburg, Major Dunham, the officer in charge, obtained a spare horse for him to ride. At McConnellsburg, however, the general in command, a be-whiskered savage whom even his own men scornfully called "Blackbeard," noticed that one prisoner was riding and peremptorily and profanely ordered that he be made to walk. The commandant, fearing Blackbeard's wrath, now refused to let David march with his grandfather, though he was allowed to carry the old man's scanty belongings. By that time, however, the worst of the mountains had been passed.

To Old Tom the march seemed to be made in a trance. His old loquaciousness was gone now and he scarcely spoke a dozen words in the course of a day. Occasionally he would seem to rouse from his dreams and look around him as if bewildered at his surroundings, then his eyes would fall on David, who walked just behind, and he would relapse into semiconsciousness. Once they stopped to rest at a narrow glade between two mountains, and Tom, looking dazedly about him from his horse, seemed by an effort of will-power to bring himself to life.

"I've camped hyar a hundred times when I was packin'," he said to David. "They used to call it Braddee's Sleep."

At the summit of North Mountain, the last important outpost of the mountains, when the column halted to rest, Old Tom took his hand from the stirrup of his guard and looked back across the tumbled ridges to the west. David, watching his grandfather anxiously, saw tears trickling from his eyes into his unkempt whiskers, and turned away that he might not see the old man's shame.

David hovered over his grandfather constantly and performed his share of the prisoners' duties, such as gathering wood and straw and doing the cooking. He scraped the mud from the old man's clothes daily, and when he could,

heated water for him to use in washing. He discovered that if he filled their canteens with hot water and placed them at his grandfather's feet the old man would fall asleep more quickly and seem to be more rested in the morning. Even the guard came to expect this routine and would allow David to remain alone by the cooking fires to heat the water. Still, in spite of all David could do, Old Tom seemed visibly to fail day by day. His lucid moments became infrequent and as he walked he took to muttering about the distant past. They had come out now to the rolling country east of the Susquehanna, but Old Tom labored over the rises as if they were mountains, bending over with the effort. He had once been proud of his erect carriage, but now, even on level ground, his shoulders showed that he had taken on a permanent stoop. His breath came wheezily and he was developing a hacking cough that warned of consumption. Yet he never complained, and David felt as if he were tending a living corpse. All desire to live, he sensed, had left his grandfather. The old man was merely continuing to breathe until death should release him.

On Christmas eve the prisoners and their guard stopped near the Black Horse Tavern just west of Philadelphia at the hamlet of Bala. The next day they were to be marched through Philadelphia, an event that had been advertised as the culminating event in the crushing of the rebellion. There had been little time for David to become bitter on the march, for his attentions to Old Tom had kept him busy, but he resented the ordeal of the morrow as he had never resented anything before. He found himself slipping back toward the sullen defiance that he had once felt toward the gentry. This was nothing, he mused bitterly as he shook his white hunting shirt out of his war bag, but a moral show intended to warn the recalcitrant democrats of Philadelphia

lest they overstep the bounds that God and the gentry had set about the common people. Thirteen thousand troops marched to the West and then marched back again, hundreds of thousands of dollars spent, and a score of prisoners to show for it; it was like using a meat ax to kill a spider.

The next morning the prisoners were paraded before the tavern and each man was handcuffed to a stirrup. At Blackbeard's order, each prisoner was given a slip of paper with the word "insurgent" written on it and told to place it in his hat. David kept his paper and his grandfather's and tore them up while they were crossing the Schuylkill River bridge. The guards, who had by now become quite friendly with the prisoners, looked charitably in the other direction.

They had scarcely entered the city before they heard the roar of the crowd waiting along the carefully outlined route to see the hairy yahoos from over the mountains. David would rather have walked across the Alleghenies twice than to have faced the mob, which naturally, since it had been led to believe that it was seeing guilty rebels being led to punishment, rent the air with jeers, cat-calls, and hisses. For two hours, while they marched by a circuitous route through the city, the crowd pressed upon the flanks of the dragoons to gain a glimpse of the prisoners or hung from the windows of the houses along the way.

The excitement had roused Old Tom from his lethargy and he now walked firmly erect, looking from side to side with a haughty air that defied the crowd to do its worst. Suddenly before a pretentious mansion on High Street the broken jeers of the people swelled into a shout and David saw that they were cheering a tall, elderly man in a snuff-brown suit who had stepped upon the balcony. Old Tom looked at the man and spat.

"It's Washington," he said over his shoulder. "The bloody son-of-a-bitch."

Fortunately for the old man, his comment was lost in the roar of the crowd. It must have been the polite residential district, David decided, for well-dressed people were standing on balconies or porches before pretentious homes, and though they did not join the jeering of the mob they viewed the prisoners with interest and commented laughingly upon the procession.

And then David saw John Penburne. He was leaning against a porch pillar before a handsome brick house that almost overhung the street and was watching the prisoners with an air of melancholy. Next to him was a handsome, black-haired woman of perhaps forty, and near-by a laughing girl leaned on the porch rail and flirted with two men who stood beside her.

John Penburne's eyes came to rest upon Old Tom at the same moment that the old man looked up and recognized him. For a moment Old Tom seemed to be staggered by some recollection out of the past, then he straightened proudly.

"This is your doin's, Jack Penburne," he shouted, as he half turned and waved his free hand toward the line of prisoners.

"Tom Braddee!" cried John Penburne. "I— I—." His eyes fell upon David and he stopped abruptly, then turned and walked quickly into the house.

The weary march dragged on to the Walnut Street jail, which ironically enough looked across the square to Independence Hall. The jail was a long, two-story stone structure with a projecting center gable overlooking the great stone steps up which the prisoners were marshalled. David and his grandfather were assigned a cell together on the second floor, either because they stood at the head of the alphabet or because of the intercession of Major Dunham.

The cell was about eight by ten feet and was furnished

with a double-decker bunk, a chair, and a small table holding a basin and a pitcher of water. The window was large, and low enough for the occupants of the room to look out through the heavy iron bars across Independence Square.

Old Tom's iron determination had melted almost as soon as they had left the street, and David had been forced to half carry him up the stairs. In their cell he collapsed upon his bunk, weeping maudlin tears of exhaustion. For some reason the prisoners were given no supper that evening, but Tom would scarcely have been in any condition to eat had he possessed the food.

The next morning a wicket in the door was opened and a jailer thrust in a small tray with a lump of coarse bread and a tin bucket of bean soup. There was a small parcel also, wrapped in brown paper, but David was so famished that he put the parcel aside until he had eaten his own portion and made his grandfather eat some of the bread soaked in the soup.

Then he opened the package and found that it contained a letter from Brackenridge dated December 1, the lawyer's own copy of Horace in the original Latin, and a small copy of *Pilgrim's Progress*.

"My dear David,"—read the letter—"it is with a heavy heart that I write you these lines, knowing as I do that they will reach you only after you have undergone the cruelties of a march of three hundred miles across one of the most inhospitable countries in the world, and that in the most inclement season of the year. However, by the time you receive this those Horrors will be past and you will be received into the bosom of our model House of Correction.

"I do not wish to insult you with false hopes, so I will merely say that I do not consider it likely that

your release can be obtained before the Spring of the year, after the popular clamor against those whom they deem insurgents has died down. I have talked with General Lee upon your case and others and he assures me that it is likely no one will suffer capital punishment. I can give you assurance also, from my knowledge as a Lawyer, that you cannot be convicted of any crime, save perhaps the one of avoiding Arrest. But that you may have proper advice in the interim I have asked my good Friend Attorney Lawson to visit you and to act for you and your grandfather until I can come in the Spring. He will do everything for you that the nature of the case renders possible and you may give him the trust that you would to me.

"Mr. Lawson will pay you the sum of five pounds which is owing you from me, in order that you may have some small comforts of tobacco and liquor. I send you as well my copy of Horace that you may enjoy from it the same consolations of philosophy that I have often found to be of benefit. Mrs. Brackenridge requests that she be remembered to you with the kindest wishes, and she sends you her copy of Mr. Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. I tell her that Calvinist theology is cold comfort to a prisoner, but her word is that since it was written in a prison cell it should be of use to pass the hours of imprisonment.

"The letter and books will be delivered to you through the kindness of Mr. Gallatin, whose departure in haste for the legislative session necessitates that I make a speedy end.

"It is my earnest hope, David, that in this crisis you shall look upon me as your Friend. Everything that I have is at your disposal and we shall yet see a favorable issue."

David laid aside the letter and took up the Horace. Its sheepskin binding was polished and scratched with use and there was not a page that was not interlined in Brackenridge's heavy hand. The lawyer was giving him, David knew, his most precious possession in this book—perhaps even a part of himself. A page turned and David saw two lines encircled:

Quodsi me lyricis vatibus inseris,
Sublimi feriam sidera vertice.

But if by thee place 'mid the bards I'm given,
With soaring head I'll strike the stars of heaven.

The lines were an index, thought David, to the soul of a disappointed and very minor poet. Brackenridge would rather be known to posterity as the author of one sublime sonnet than as the greatest lawyer that ever lived. The western forests and mountains, the crudity and ignorance of those around him, and the social conflicts that had beset his years seemed to bear down on him every moment; he lived in an aura of nostalgia for something better from which nothing but whiskey could lift him. In one of his black moods, David remembered, the lawyer had once covered a piece of foolscap with the lines:

An age employed in edging steel
Can no poetic raptures feel.

David placed the Horace and the *Pilgrim's Progress* beside Daniel Strong's Bible on the table. Well, he would not lack for reading material, at least. These books would bear re-reading many times.

The jailer's key grated in the lock and the door swung

open to admit a sandy-haired young man wearing a stylish blue greatcoat.

"I am Attorney Lawson," he said to David as the door closed behind him. "Mr. Brackenridge asked me to call and see if there was anything I could do for you and your grandfather."

"Nothing," said David grimly, "except to get us out of here."

The lawyer flushed and groped for an answer. He evidently was not a very quick-thinking man and seemed inclined to regard it as his duty to provide a serious-minded counterbalance to a frivolous world. David found himself wondering then and many times later why Brackenridge had seen fit to engage him as counsel.

"I wish it were possible to obtain your freedom at once," said Mr. Lawson presently, "but I fear that will have to wait. I have it in mind to petition the court to have your case tried in the vicinage where your offense is alleged to have been committed, so that you will be able to obtain witnesses at less expense."

"Might that not work both ways?" ventured David. "If I can get no witnesses for me here, is it likely that there will be any against me?"

The lawyer flushed again and patiently changed the subject. "Would it not be well for me to talk to your grandfather, also?"

David glanced at Old Tom snoring peacefully on the bunk. "There will be opportunity later on," he said. "He is exhausted and confused by the strain of the journey—and by the beastly reception your fellow townsmen gave us yesterday."

At sight of David's scowl the young lawyer picked up his hat and rose hastily. "Perhaps," he said, "it would be better for me to return after you have both had an opportunity to

recuperate. Nothing much can be done, anyhow, until the court sits next month."

He rapped on the door with his knuckles, the key grated again, and the door opened.

"I will call again in a couple of weeks," said the lawyer from the threshold. "In the meantime, if there is anything I can do, a note to my home on Race Street near Ninth will fetch me."

He bowed uncertainly and disappeared, but the door did not close. The turnkey beckoned to someone in the hall, then turned to David.

"Mr. Penburne to see you," he said.

John Penburne stood by the door, abashed before the steady eyes of the boy that he knew in his soul he had wronged.

"I had hoped never to see you here," he said slowly, almost accusingly.

"You didn't have to come," answered David with a sneer.

"No—no. I mean that I was glad when I heard that you had escaped."

"You signed the warrant, didn't you?"

"Yes, I did. But I knew nothing of your grandfather's arrest, David, until I read his name in the newspapers."

Old Tom's snores ended in a gurgle and he struggled to sit up. Before David could interfere John Penburne was beside the bunk assisting the old man to get his feet out of the bed. A paroxysm of hacking coughs followed for a moment, then Old Tom asked in a strangled voice for a drink of water.

Penburne turned to the table and poured a cup of water from the pitcher and held it for the old man to drink.

"Thank ye, son," said the old man. "That's better."

His filmy eyes turned up to the face above him and recognized it for the first time.

"Jack Penburne!" cried the old man. He thrust away the assisting hand and hauled himself to his feet, clinging desperately to the foot pole of the bed. He raised one hand in an imperious gesture and pointed to the door.

"Git out!" he said.

"But, Tom," said Penburne, "I've come to help you."

"Ye've done yore damage," said the old man hotly. "We want no halp from you. Git out."

Penburne looked appealingly to David, but the young man's face was set and forbidding. He looked back at Old Tom, then walked slowly to the door and as it swung open passed out without a backward glance. The old man swayed and would have fallen but David caught him and let him gently down on the bunk. He was coughing again, more violently now than before, and spitting on the floor at his feet. David, as he looked down, was seized by a premonition of death. His grandfather was spitting blood.

Chapter 35

THE MONTHS PASSED FOR DAVID LIKE A NIGHTMARE; EVERY day black despair seemed to settle more closely over him and force into the open the streak of sullen obstinacy that was his greatest weakness. It was not, perhaps, so much because he was abiding in one spot—for more than a year he had left the vicinity of Pittsburgh Academy only on rare occasions—as it was that his imprisonment there was forced and unjust. It was while reading Daniel Strong's Bible that he found himself described in Leviticus as the scapegoat upon whom the sins of the people had been laid. That, perhaps, would not have been unbearable had he been allowed to escape into the wilderness, but he resented with his whole being his sacrifice as a sin offering. Deliberately he refused to accept the unavoidable fact gracefully. Sullenly and stubbornly, day after day, he brooded upon his lot until his mind became a fester of resentment and hatred.

It was only as he lost himself in his books that he was able to leave his cell in spirit and roam the delectable country to which in the past two years he had tomahawked his claim. But even there, as was inevitable, he soon began to lose ground. The more he read the Bible the more he saw in it of man's inhumanity to man. Day by day he became more convinced that life, beyond what could be seized in the hands and enjoyed, was doomed to futility. Men were either silly, ineffectual sheep grazing on a barren pasture, or wolves waiting to pounce upon them; and David came in his mind to despise the one and envy the other.

Let him but once get free and he too would become a wolf, slaying without pity or remorse.

He turned from the Bible to *Pilgrim's Progress* and followed Christian's journey from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City. At every step David found himself fighting against the credibility of the allegory, marshalling against it the tenets of his new-found creed. And yet at every page he found his eyes swimming in unmanly tears and his soul consumed with a wordless longing to believe. That nameless feeling of guilt and depression that had overwhelmed him before in the presence of Daniel Strong descended upon him again and haunted him day and night. He finished the book and began it again, hunting up the marginal references in the Bible like a Presbyterian theological student training for the ministry. When he reached the place in the narrative where Christian and Faithful sojourned in the Delectable Mountains, he paused as if at a familiar scene. Yes, out of the past he seemed to see Daniel Strong on his knees by the immigrant boats. "The delectable country," the preacher was saying, "and all its gardens, and orchards, and vineyards, and fountains of water wherein we drink and wash ourselves are Immanuel's and we are his sheep for whom he laid down his life."

This, then, thought David, was the origin of that phrase that had burned itself upon his heart and mind. Was this the delectable country that he sought, a land filled with stupidly grazing sheep forever safe from the marauding wolf? He looked up from his book and across the square to the historic hall, which seemed to mock him with the phrases that had been coined there in defense of liberty and human rights. Across the snow-swept commons self-satisfied, fat-burdened burghers, warmly wrapped against the cold, were hurrying to their firesides, oblivious alike to noble pronouncements and raw reality. David turned in a

sudden passion and flung the book from him to the farthest corner of the room.

"Diabolus," he cried, "take my soul, if I have a soul, but let me out of here."

The bitter reality of prison bars had triumphed over the smug inanities of the allegory. From that moment David was no longer a dreaming boy, but a hardened, cynical, disillusioned man. Yet, the next day, because he must occupy his mind to keep from going insane, he took up his Bible and began to read it again—but now he read it as literature, noble in purpose, but little to the point in a world of dog eat dog. The *Pilgrim's Progress* he never opened again: it lay neglected on the shelf and when, months later, David stepped out of his cell a free man, there it remained.

Meanwhile David found himself turning more and more to the polished lines of Horace. Here was a man who, in the main, took the world as he found it, and found it a world to be enjoyed or satirized, not preached at nor wrested by main force into the shape of an utopia. Wine, and women, and gold were here to be obtained and utilized, in moderation it was true, but still to be gained by hook or crook by the man who was alert to reality. Perhaps because he was looking for it, David found there fluid in which to temper his mind and heart to new hardness. Nothing, he swore, would ever hurt him again, and diligently and bitterly he brooded, forging new links in his armor against the world of God and man.

But still through it all that nameless burden persisted though he resolutely thrust it again and again into the background. It came upon him chiefly at night, after his candle had burned out and he could no longer seek solace in his books. At such times he would leap down from his bunk and pace the floor, raging to escape from his cell and

run to the wilderness where he could rid himself of his burden. Once it came to him that, like Christian, run as he might to escape, the burden had become so much a part of him that he could never cast it down save at the Cross. In a frenzy he sprang at the door of his cell, beating upon it, and screaming for release, heedless of Old Tom's feeble protests and quieted at last only by the turnkey's threats to have him thrown into a dungeon.

The daily routine of the prison glided by as smoothly and inexorably as a hand about the face of a clock. Every morning the prisoners were released in groups from their cells to empty their slop buckets in the cesspool and, when the weather was clement, to exercise in the courtyard. Old Tom descended the stairs, leaning on David's arm, and walked slowly about the yard, while David, to the amusement of the more sedentary prisoners, jumped and swung his arms and turned handsprings and cartwheels. Once a week the prisoners were given a ration of hot water with which to wash their clothes and scrub out their cells. Though some measure of sanitation was thus afforded, the blankets and heavier clothes were never washed, and David found it necessary to keep up a constant watch for body lice. Head lice were not a problem as the prisoners' heads were kept close-cropped.

David had hoped that as spring approached, Old Tom would mend, but, though he seemed to be in no great pain, he continued to fade. He had taken to bed long ago, save for the hours when he could descend to the courtyard and soak in the sun. Galloping consumption, then known as a form of phthisic, is a disease that is unpredictable in its course, and medical science of the eighteenth century could not combat it. By the last days of April, when the gardens of Walnut Street were putting forth yellow blooms, Old

Tom seemed to be within a few weeks of death. Then came his summons to court.

By special permission David was allowed to accompany his grandfather to the trial. Of a dozen testimonies given, not one tended to prove anything, admitted the prosecutor, save that the old man was demented. He found it unnecessary to hear a single witness in defense and joined with Mr. Lawson in praying the court to charge the jury to release him. Five minutes later, the jury, without having left the box, returned a verdict of not guilty.

Mr. Lawson would have taken the old man to a tavern, but he asked to spend his last night with David in the prison. The next morning Mr. Lawson appeared with a bearded Dutchman whom he introduced as Mr. Fifer, a Conestoga wagoner, who had agreed to take Old Tom with his load of goods as far as Chambersburg and there make arrangements for his transportation to Pittsburgh with a packtrain. At the thought of returning to his beloved mountains the old man seemed to gain strength and courage. He was not licked yet, he opined, and departed in high spirits.

On the first of May, Brackenridge arrived in Philadelphia and straightway, through those mysterious instrumentalities known only to lawyers, David's case began to move toward trial. On Friday morning, May 8, he appeared before the court with Brackenridge and Lawson defending him. Not a single witness was present to take the stand against him. Mr. Lawson, who never lost an opportunity to place himself on parade, asked leave of the court to place Mr. Brackenridge in the stand as a character witness. The president judge refused and the associate judge, Richard Peters, a man celebrated all over the country for his wit, remarked testily that Mr. Brackenridge might better produce character witnesses for himself.

Lawson's hackles flew up at once. "Your honor," he said acidulously, "I am astonished at your remark."

Judge Peters' countenance flushed angrily. "Sir," he said, "such statements as that are in contempt of court, and an apology will be necessary on your part."

Brackenridge stepped adroitly into the breach. "Permit me," he said with his brilliant smile, "to offer an excuse for my young friend. He is new in these matters, and, when he has practiced as long before your honor as I have, he will be astonished at nothing."

The speech tickled Judge Peters in his weakest spot and he burst into a good-humored laugh in which the other judge joined.

"A fair enough comeback, Mr. Brackenridge," said the president judge, as he brought his gavel down on the desk. "The case is dismissed for lack of evidence."

David repaired with Brackenridge to the latter's tavern, the Half Moon, for a dinner of roast beef, potatoes, and ale. The lawyer talked like a man who had been starved for human companionship, and in fact his reception by his Philadelphia acquaintances, at first, had been so cool that to save himself embarrassment he had gone about the streets with his chin in the air, inspecting the buildings, as he humorously wrote to Sabina, "like a disciple of Palladio, examining the architecture."

David ate absent-mindedly, almost sullenly, the observant Brackenridge thought. Only once, when the lawyer told of his victory over Thorne to the tune of five hundred dollars, did David show animation, an animation that somehow was not pretty to see. The lawyer hastily changed the subject.

"I fear that you have not been in very competent legal hands this winter," he said. "I had expected that Mr. Lawson, on account of his social connections, would have been

able to do more for you. Certain it is that he has little comprehension of the ramifications of law and popular feeling. He made a fatal error in the case of John Mitchell when he chose a jury of Quakers, thinking they would be less likely to be severe. Naturally they adjudged him guilty. Quakers are best in ordinary cases involving murder, assault, or rape, but in cases of treason give me a jury of Presbyterians every time. To your Calvinist there is only one kind of treason punishable by death, and that is treason to God."

David withdrew his attention from the lawyer and allowed it to roam the void within himself. So Brackenridge had retained Lawson for his social standing. No matter, it was all over now. All he asked for was to get away. He did not even wish to take in the sights of Philadelphia; that nightmare march on Christmas day had given him all he wanted to see of the city for a thousand lifetimes. He must get away, he brooded, back to the West, where fever and ague and redskins were a-prowl but a man's soul was his own. It would be better to go on even farther west. In Pittsburgh, now that the federal government had triumphed, there would be too much of law and physic, as Old Tom disparagingly dubbed civilization. At the thought of his grandfather David was filled with a vague uneasiness. The old man had been in no condition to travel and there were a thousand chances for trouble between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. David's attention came back slowly to Brackenridge.

"It was the wrong way to gain our liberty, David," the lawyer was saying. "The day of revolutions is over for us. We must use political means. We must outvote them."

"How many ballots does it take to outvote one bayonet?" demanded David laconically.

"A just proposition," said Brackenridge, "but it was we

who gave the excuse for the resort to force. For my part I have learned much since I boldly bearded the political powers in my legislative days and received nothing but abuse for my straightforwardness. It is now my purpose to get gain with the abuse; if I ever intend to get from under my present eclipse it is my cue to eschew straightforwardness for deviousness. Henceforth all of us who stand for the people must learn guile. We must breed men who can match the aristocrats trick for trick."

"Aye," said David, "and have them go over to the enemy. Where were Findley and Gallatin—our democratic paladins—when the test came? Where, for that matter, were you?"

At this brutally direct thrust Brackenridge flushed. "You have become bitter through your suffering, David," he said. "You understood our strategy well enough at the time."

The lawyer was keenly aware that David's silence conveyed an element of contemptuousness, and it stung him more sharply than would open hostility. If David Braddee refused to stay with him Brackenridge foresaw a long and lonely struggle back to a place in the public esteem where he would be in a position to strike a blow again for his ideal of a literate democracy. Gallatin and Findley were broken reeds, cautious and humorless time-servers, who, like men walking on thin ice, sounded out public opinion before they took a step. The only hope lay in the new generation, in young men of daring and imagination, and of all those he knew he most coveted David, coveted him with an intensity that reminded him of how Parson Eldred had once coveted Hugh Brackenridge for God. The lawyer felt that he was making a last desperate appeal.

"We are not strong enough to beat them in a revolution," he said, "and moreover we are a constitutional government where peaceful instruments lie ready to our hands. But if we let the aristocrats hold us down now we are lost. All

that education and freedom can do for us and our children is at stake. It is our burden and our privilege that we live in a time of crisis, that we must take our places on one side or the other. For me, at least, my duty is clear. God helping me, I shall never consent to allow the rich and the well-born to appropriate the spiritual and temporal heritage of all mankind to their own peculiar uses."

David pushed back his chair. "I must be on my way," he said.

"Already!" said Brackenridge in surprise. "I had hoped—" He stopped, half in sorrow, half in anger. He had hoped to take David about the city, to introduce him to certain gentlemen of influence, and in a way to initiate him into politics.

David lifted the strap of his war bag over his head. "Do you know," he said passionately, "what it is not to breath a free breath of air for nearly six months? To be led through the streets like a performing bear at the end of a chain? If you do, you will know why I wish to shake the dust of Philadelphia from my feet." He picked up his blanket roll and slung it over his shoulder, then added, half apologetically, "I am aware of the force of what you have said, but I cannot answer you now. I must have time to think. Just now it seems as if I shall never again have faith in law, or humanity, or God."

Brackenridge rose and looked out of the window across the tavern courtyard strewn with crushed shell to the steeple of Independence Hall. He waved a hand in the direction of the Hall.

"When you are ready," he said, "come back to me, David. The work that was done there is not finished yet. There is much left for men like us to do, but it cannot wait too long."

He placed his hands on the boy's shoulders. "David," he

said, "I have dreamed great dreams for you; if you fail you disappoint not only me but countless thousands yet unborn. They will have a right to ask us why we allowed tollgates to be built along the road to the delectable country."

Chapter 36

THAT AFTERNOON DAVID WALKED AS IF THE DEVIL WERE after him, and in spite of the stiff new brogans he had bought on the way he had by nightfall put twelve miles between himself and the hateful capital city. When he finally stopped at a wayside tavern it was because he was so weary he could go no farther and his shoes were wearing blisters on his heels. While he waited for food he salved his blisters with goose grease and rubbed the shoes well with neats-foot oil. When the old tavern woman saw the condition of his feet she gave him a pair of knitted wool socks. After supper, when he went upstairs to the great dormitory in which travelers slept, he was seized by such a horror of being shut in by walls that he took his blanket to the barnyard and slept in the shelter of a straw-stack.

The next day he moderated his mad pace and found that his feet did not trouble him greatly. He ate his supper at an inn, and after providing himself with some bread, cheese, and meat, continued on his way. That night he slept in a field beside a strawstack. At daylight he was on the road again, eating his provisions as he walked. The picturesque little Dutch villages with their red brick houses set flush with the street dropped behind him rapidly as he forged westward. On the morning of the fourth day, Monday, he sat on a bank above the partially flooded Susquehanna and watched a huge ferry flat, bearing a six-horse team and Conestoga wagon, come efficiently to the landing. The wagon thundered off the flat and up the ascent to the

plateau. On the left wheel horse rode a familiar bearded figure. At David's hail Mr. Fifer stopped his team.

"Vat you vant?" he demanded equably.

"I'm David Braddee. You took my grandfather to Chambersburg."

"Oh, *ja*, *ja*. I took Mr. Brattee dere. He very sick man."

"Sick? Did you leave him in Chambersburg?"

"Nein. I vould have put him mit mine schwester, but he vould go on. Twenty-five dollar to Mr. McCluskey, the pack-master, I giff to take him to Pittsburgh, like Mr. Penburne say."

"Penburne?" ejaculated David.

"Sure. Mr. Penburne. He tell me not noddings to alt Mr. Brattee to say."

So John Penburne had found a way to thrust his charity on the old man, thought David savagely. He might have known it hadn't been Lawson.

"When did McCluskey leave Chambersburg?" demanded David.

Fifer counted solemnly on his fingers. "I tink last Tuesday," he said.

"Is McCluskey a good man?"

"*Ja*, I tink *ja*," answered Fifer.

"Don't you know?" returned David testily.

"Sure. Effrybotty know McCluskey."

David cursed him for a dumb Dutchman and set off down the bank while Fifer looked after him for a moment in bewilderment, then resumed his usual placidity and started his team.

On Wednesday David reached Chambersburg and his uneasiness prompted him to make inquiry concerning McCluskey. The proprietor of the wagon stand where Fifer always put up had seen Old Tom go off with McCluskey, scarcely able to sit in the saddle, but when it came to the

packmaster's character Gaius buttoned up his mouth and refused to comment.

"Must be a bad Injun if he's got you scairt like this," commented David. Mine host only rolled his eyes.

"Well, God damn it," said David, "are you afraid to tell me what he looks like?"

The landlord drew his finger from his right cheekbone diagonally across his mouth to his chin. "He has a scar here," he said. "If you once see it you'll never forget it."

David remembered then that he had seen the man several times in Pittsburgh. He was a big man who bore a reputation for ferocity, but who far from trying to conceal his scar carried a case of razors and shaved every morning no matter where he might be. Well, thought David with a kind of fierce joy, even Buck McCluskey wasn't too tough for him to chew.

He stopped at a store and bought a tomahawk and hunting knife, then went to a tavern to eat. After dinner he set out again, vowing grimly that if anything had happened to Old Tom, McCluskey would have his scar crossed with another.

Near Fort Loudon, just west of Chambersburg, David reached Cove Mountain, and from there on the mountains cut down his pace. At every tavern and village he made inquiry for McCluskey and the old man traveling with him. Apparently everyone had seen them and noticed that the old man was ailing powerfully, and David was beginning to berate himself for his fears when suddenly at a house beyond Schellsburg his inquiries elicited no word of the old man. Yes, McCluskey had been through. Reckon they ought to know him, but there wasn't no old man with him. Only Clem Bogardus, his hind-driver.

David bought a supply of provisions and stuffed them into his war bag, then turned back upon his trail and kept

a sharp lookout to both sides for signs leading off the road. At the place Old Tom had pointed out to him five months before as Braddee's Sleep there was a narrow glade where the road crossed a brook, and there some packers had recently camped. David beat about the camp in a widening circle and presently, beside the brook, he glimpsed the back of an old lean-to. David walked around to the front. Yes, there lay Old Tom, motionless and pale as death.

David knelt beside the old man and saw his eyes open slowly as if he were coming back from a great distance.

"I been expectin' ye, Davy," he said. "I didn't think they could keep ye away from yore old gran'ther."

"No, granddad," David said softly, "they couldn't keep me away."

"Lift me up a bit, will ye, laddy?" said Old Tom. "This ain't a very good bed."

"I'll do better than that," said David. "I'll make you a real bed."

He went into the woods and after a few minutes' work with his tomahawk returned with several armfuls of pine boughs. Carefully he lifted Old Tom out of the lean-to and disposed the boughs tips inward in order to form the softest possible bed. He then spread the old man's blanket over the pine needles and lifted him back on the bed. The movement brought on a spell of coughing, but after that the old man sighed gratefully and seemed visibly to relax.

"Thanks, son," he said, "it ain't been very comfortable here. They took everything I had except this blanket. Took ten dollars Mr. Lawson give me, too."

"The blasted hullions," said David viciously, "they might at least have taken you to Schellsburg to die in a house."

"No," replied Old Tom weakly. "I'd ruther die here, in Braddee's Sleep. Only it war harder than I'd reckoned, bein' alone until you came."

"How long you been here, gran'ther?"

"I don't know—maybe five-six days."

"Did they leave you anything to eat?"

"A little. I couldn't get it down."

"Well, I don't have much to make broth with, but I can try," said David.

If he had had a rifle or even a sling he might have brought down some birds or a squirrel, but as it was he would have to set snares. He departed for the glade to hunt for horse hairs and on the way, by a lucky throw, broke a robin's wing. The bird was soon captured and its neck wrung. He had well nigh forgotten his old-time prowess at throwing stones, but now that the necessity had arisen he found it perfectly possible to bring down small game and within half an hour he returned to the lean-to with four sizeable birds. In a few minutes he had started a fire with his flint and steel, cleaned the game, and set two of the birds to stew in his heavy tincup. The others he skewered above the fire on the ends of sticks thrust in to the ground.

Old Tom drank the hot broth gratefully and ate some of the meat that David cleaned from the little bones and thrust into his mouth.

"You're a good lad, Davy," said the old man when he had finished, "a lot better than the boys they grow nowadays. It's all on account of you kin kill your own snakes. That's the main thing in life, to be able to take keer o' yore own troubles."

The old man sucked noisily at his few remaining teeth. "You was right about the insurrection," he said. "We warn't big enough to whup the gov'mint. Maybe we could ha' done it ef the same breed o' men infested the woods as did when I was young. But they ain't—they're farmers now, not riflemen. They shake their fisties at the gov'mint like a passel o' boys an' then run lickety-split back ter the plow-

tail an' pretend they ain't never been away. Men ain't what they used ter be in my day."

Old Tom sighed and lay silent for a moment. "You been killin' my snakes a powerful long time now, Davy," he said. "I kept a-hopin' maybe I'd git on my feet again until jest the other day when McCluskey left me here. Then I knowed it war time ter turn in my plunder. The melishy hain't got no more use fer me. I don't bear McCluskey no malice. That's the way the Injuns do sometimes, an' it's a right good custom. A man dies out in the woods with the smell o' the pine in his nose an' the sun in his face an' God's creeturs a-rustlin' through the underbresh. I reckon maybe that dyin' like that a man comes as clost to the promised land as he ever kin, Davy."

The old man tried to turn on his side and David helped him over and propped up his back. The effort brought on another fit of coughing but after it had subsided Old Tom looked across the brook and David saw his eyes travel up the fresh green of the mountain to the blue sky above.

"I'm glad it's spring," he said.

The next moment he was asleep and David went into the woods to set his snares. But he might as well have saved himself the trouble. The next morning when he awoke Old Tom had fallen into a coma and two days later he died without having gained consciousness. David sat beside him all the time watching the strangling phlegm creep higher and higher in his lungs and throat and his breath coming ever more harshly, until finally with a last long respiration, as if of relief, the overtaxed lungs ceased breathing and Old Tom was dead.

That moment David swiftly began his preparations, as if working against time. He cut two stout but slender sixteen-foot saplings and left certain of the branches untrimmed. Then he made several trips into the woods and returned

with long slabs of bark and tips of aromatic cedar. He spread some of the bark on the ground and lay the cedar over it, then laid Old Tom, tenderly folded in his blanket, upon the cedar. With long strips of buckskin cut from his old hunting shirt he tied cedar boughs and bark slabs around the corpse until nothing was visible but a long cylinder of bark. He laid the saplings parallel and tied the branches firmly together like the rungs of a ladder, then the cylinder was laid upon the ladder and the remaining branches of the saplings brought over and tied together. After that David built a new lean-to close to the road but sheltered from view and here he placed the corpse and piled his war bag and blankets beside it. As if a great load were off his mind he searched carefully in the brook for a couple of flat stones and when he had found them, carried them to the road. Imperturbably, then, as if he had all the time in the world he sat down and patiently began to whet his knife.

This was on Tuesday. During the following days a dozen packtrains and many individual travelers passed, and once a Conestoga wagon lumbered by, though as a rule wagons stopped east of the mountains during the uncertain spring season. On Friday the sharp click of horses' shoes against stones came from the western descent, and David left the rabbit he had been cleaning, wiped his knife on a tuft of grass and thrust it into its sheath. Then he loosened his tomahawk, whetted to razor-keenness, and stood waiting.

The packtrain came down the slope and debouched toward the glade. Yes, the big front rider with a rifle slung at his back could be no other than Buck McCluskey. A little closer and his face, with its ghastly diagonal scar was visible. David stepped into the road and seized the horse's bridle.

"I'll fight ye, McCluskey," he said, "just as you are on horseback."

McCluskey looked down at the slight figure of the auburn-haired boy.

"Fight?" he said contemptuously. "Get out o' my way."

"Take keer of yerself!" warned David. In that instant his tomahawk was out and he sprang to the side of McCluskey's horse. The bright weapon circled in the sunlight and descended upon the tendon of the rider's left foot. McCluskey howled with surprise and pain and his horse reared, but David had dropped his tomahawk and was dragging the man from the saddle. The next moment McCluskey was on the road, there was the thud of a heavy brogan on the pit of his stomach, and David was kneeling above him, knife in hand.

David sprang away and a streak of blood spurted from the face of the prostrate man at a right angle to the livid scar. As the hind rider spurred up David cut the strap of McCluskey's rifle and faced about.

"Throw your weapons on the ground, Bogardus," he said. "Use your left hand."

David picked up the knife, the tomahawk, and the rifle, and relieved the half insensible McCluskey of his arms.

"Take care of him before he bleeds to death," David curtly commanded the hind rider.

Bogardus knelt beside the packmaster and began cutting away the trouser leg and adjusting a tourniquet. David turned to the packtrain and selected two ponies, which he cut loose and led aside. They carried bags of grain in addition to their packs and these David saved, though he cut the packs loose. Next he brought out the bark-wrapped corpse and strapped it between the two ponies tandem.

McCluskey was sitting on a low bank beside the road when David returned.

"Just in case you gentlemen want to look me up later," said David, "my name is David Braddee, and I'm to be found at McKee's Rocks when I'm not boating on the river." He had completely forgotten for the moment that he had not been a boatman for two years. "Yes," he said, at Bogardus' startled look, "it was my grandfather you left here to die. I'm taking him home to bury, and I'll need two of your ponies."

He threw down the hunting knives and tomahawks, clicked the rifle locks and threw down the rifles, then opened the powder horns and scattered the powder in the breeze.

"If McCluskey wants to go to law," said David to Bogardus, "I can produce witnesses to prove that he had Tom Braddee east of here but not west. He'll be smart enough to know that he can be held for murder."

David turned to go, then added over his shoulder as an afterthought:

"I might just as well keep these ponies, now that I have them. You robbed Tom Braddee of ten dollars while he lay dying."

David slipped the bridle of the lead pony over his arm and started westward without so much as a glance behind.

He traveled rapidly. Only once did he stop near a habitation and then it was to buy some food. When the children ran after him at the farm houses or the farmers hailed him from the fields and asked what he was totin', David would answer laconically, "A corpse." At that, the curious invariably sheered off and allowed him to proceed in peace. He passed through Ligonier and found his two words as powerful as an open sesame. Greensburg he passed late at night, then camped in the woods until noon. Wednesday morning at dawn he roused the caretaker at the upper ferry in Pittsburgh and was over the river before the town was astir.

An hour after he landed at the foot of the Washington Road he was at McKee's Rocks.

Word was sent out swiftly that the body would be lifted Thursday morning at ten. The burial of Old Tom Braddee was one long remembered around the Rocks. That night as Old Tom lay in state still encased in his bark coffin in a room heavy with the scent of pine, the simple-hearted neighbors who had so often hung upon his words gathered in to pay their last respects. Every bed in the house was filled with women and girls, and a score of men and boys slept in the barn or beside the strawstack.

All night David sat sleepless in the corner of the pine-scented room while Big Matt, and George, and young Dick, and Lank went in and out or sat beside the corpse. They were the blood kin of Old Tom, mused David, yet none of them were as close to the old man as he had been. Somehow it seemed fitting that Tom Braddee should have died when he did and as he did. The old days of freedom, when every man was a king in his own right, had gone and this insurrection, a last despairing effort to bring them back, had miserably failed. It was the end of an era, an era that in passing had taken with it the old man who had preached its glories as unswervingly as a Hebrew prophet might have preached the wrath of an avenging Jehovah. A new day was dawning now, a day of schools, and slick businessmen, and butter-mouthed lawyers. Once David had thought that he might become a part of that, but now he knew that he must follow the sun to the West. Here was only bitterness, and petty strife, and futility even in success.

They stood in the burial plot on the Indian mound on the rocky bluff above the river bottom, surrounding the open grave into which the bark coffin had just been lowered. No one had spoken, but David was conscious that

every eye was turned toward him. He lifted a white doe-skin arm.

"Tom Braddee," he said, "died for what he believed was right. He was more of a gentleman than those who wear satin breeches, more of a patriot than those who prate of constitutions and laws, and more of a saint than those who speak the behest of injustice and call it the voice of God. For eighty years he played fair and square in building up this new country, and at last, when he had failed to preserve its liberty, as he saw liberty, he gave up his life, as much from a broken heart as from disease.

"Neighbors, when we throw the earth into this grave we put away the last whisper of the days when every man was a king in his own right and usher in the reign of law and physic. Tom Braddee's proudest boast was that he had always killed his own snakes, and when he reached the time when he could no longer do that he was glad to go. A man, he said, had better be dead in his grave than dead on his feet."

David stooped and gathered a handful of earth to cast in the grave, then suddenly turned and threw it behind him.

"Let those bury the past who welcome the future," he cried, and bursting from the circle, he ran down the hill, a lone figure of tragedy in a white hunting shirt.

Chapter 37

THEY STOOD ON THE FOOTWALK FACING EACH OTHER WITH a desperate determination to be casual. They might have been mere acquaintances passing the time of day rather than lovers separated by a heartbreaking six months.

"Come to the shore at dawn," said David. "We will leave on the 'Elzie' for Louisville. From there we can get a flat to the Spanish territory."

Starr hesitated and David felt that moment in time drawing closer and closer, swelling as it neared, until it seemed that eternity could have been packed into the instant. He looked at Starr as if he was seeing her for the first time. She was older and thinner, he thought, and her skin seemed to be a grayish yellow, with the grime of Pittsburgh's smoke showing in the pores. Even her hair was losing its paleness. Only her eyes remained the same, deep and tragic, like the eyes of a wounded doe. It was those eyes that had brought him back, David realized suddenly, brought him back in spite of the new hardness that impelled him to break with all the past and seek a new life of toil and violence and forgetfulness. He did not want to marry her any more, he told himself as he looked down at her, but he knew that he was lying in his teeth. It had not been his sense of honor that had made him seek her out. As long as he lived, he knew now, he would be coming to her, kneeling upon his knees that he might look up and drink in the tragedy of those eyes.

A wave of silent resentment swept over him. Nothing,

by the eternal God, nothing should ever hold him down again. Nothing should trammel the freedom that was his to explore to the last vital, life-giving drop. For life had now become freedom, and with the passing of freedom life would be gone. He would roll life under his tongue every moment like a savory morsel, gamble with it against disease and violence and death, and find in those moments of peril an agony of awareness such as never came in a lifetime to the ordinary man. He had felt it back there at Braddee's Sleep when he had sprung upon the gigantic McCluskey, and the intoxication of that moment seemed at times to run in his veins like good Monongahela rye.

Starr's hesitation had been for only an instant, David realized, but to him it had been hours of living. She was speaking.

"You are free now, David," she was saying. "You must take up life where you left off."

"Where I left off," he repeated bitterly. "That time is gone forever. I must continue from where I am now."

She looked at him searchingly and David knew, without her needing to say it, that the winter's conflicts and its decision lay bare to her gaze. For a single fraction of a second, as he looked in her eyes, his own bitterness seemed to float away, and he saw that she had struggled too, but conquered. Then the sullen cloud settled once more over his spirit and he set his teeth in stubborn resistance to reason.

"But your dreams, your ambitions?" she said.

"There are no dreams," he answered. "There is only reality. There is no God, no justice, no love—only strife, and violence, and death. There is nothing to life but to eat and drink and kill and to be aware of living."

Starr's eyes were bright with the age-old wisdom given to women, and perhaps with the coming moisture of tears.

"Go and try to forget your bitterness, David," she said.

"Perhaps when you return you will have learned that suffering should make us hope, not despair." The tears welled in her eyes and fell from her cheeks into the half-filled market basket. "And, oh David," she said, "wherever you are and whatever you do, my heart shall go with you always."

She turned hastily, with one hand thrusting at her eyes, and hurried away. David watched her in an agony of conflicting stubbornness and remorse, longing to run after her and throw himself at her feet, yet too proud and self-willed to yield.

He turned and plunged over the river bank to the mud flat where the "Elzie" was tied. The cargo, he saw, was almost all aboard. He approached Big Matt with set face.

"She is not going," he said. "We can leave any time you are ready."

* * * * *

In 1795 Louisville was a bustling village of logs and clapboards situated just above the Falls of the Ohio. Already its position on the river was giving it the advantage over the rival village of Lexington, which was stranded inland and could not import raw materials or distribute goods with ease. Louisville, then, was becoming the commercial entrepôt for the goods of East and South as well as for the agricultural products of its own hinterland and was rapidly developing its manufactures. The Indian campaigns and the consequent demand of the army for farm and manufactured goods had put additional specie into circulation and given Louisville the braggart self-assurance of a boom town. Its shoreline was crowded with flats and keelboats and its dusty streets with pack horses, carts, and goods piled there for lack of space in the warehouses. In its taverns roistered hundreds of soldiers on leave, long hunters in from the

woods for a frolic, and rivermen ending one voyage and beginning the next with the inevitable spree.

One evening late in June a motley crowd boiled out of the Cross Keys Tavern, jostling and shouting as they made their way to the street. Two men separated from the throng and faced each other in a narrow circular space cleared for them by the crowd. One of them was a coatless middle-aged man dressed in the knee breeches of the Legion, and with a villainous countenance made worse by a scar over one eye that gave it a drooping leer. The other man was young, lithe, and auburn-haired, with keen, hard features, and cold, contemptuous blue eyes. He wore a new white doeskin hunting shirt lavishly embroidered with colored beads and with red, yellow, and blue cloth fringe on arms and cape.

"Cock-a-doodle doo!" crowed the soldier. "I'm the cock o' Fallen Timbers. At my crow the Injuns fled like chaff before the wind. Terror seized and tossed them like a red oak is tossed in a tempest—."

"Go it, cock!" shouted a voice, and the soldier with a wary eye on his opponent labored to whip up his anger.

Meanwhile the younger man coolly removed his hunting shirt and handed it to a bystander. He listened for a moment with curling lip to the soldier, then removed a quid of tobacco from his mouth and tossed it over the heads of the crowd.

"Kr-r-r-r!" he screamed. "I'm the ab-original Eagle of the Alleghenies. I rub my shoulders on the stars and brush my feathers with a comet's tail. When my shadow falls athwart the sun, women and children hide in the caves of the earth. At my scream the nations quake with fear and the beasts of the forest scrouge down in their lairs. It freezes the heart of Beelzebub and festoons the dome of hell with icicles. Kr-r-r-r!"

He suddenly darted at the soldier and the latter, eyes dilated with terror, clawed the wall of humanity apart and fled for his life.

"Kr-r-r-r!" screamed the eagle. "I'm the notorious David Braddee, the Eagle of the Alleghenies, and I'm pinin' for a fight. Come on, you jack-a-dandy blue-bellies, you swill-faced long hunters, you cock-a-hoop keelers. I'll break your necks like a tailor breaks a thread; I'll crack your bones like sea biscuit; I'll festoon your guts from tree to tree like a lady hangs a string o' pearls around her neck."

The crowd disgorged a solidly built Kentuckian who landed in the circle like a bear rearing on its hind legs to dance.

"Pre-pare to die, stranger," said the Kentuckian, "I'm Buck Hammers, I am, the bully o' Jefferson County, Kaintucky, and I've gouged out more eyes and bit off more noses than you have hairs on yore chin. I'm rough, I'm tough, I'm rowdy. I take men apart like clocks and scatter their guts like basswood shavings. I feed their livers to the dogs and eat their hearts raw and dripping. Their scalps cover my cabin door and I grind their teeth in a hominy block to make my dodgers."

"Kr-r-r-r!" shrilled David. "I'm cantankerous! I'm ravagerous! I'm savagerous! I'm helli-God-damn-it-to-helliferocious! I've just dined off bears' claws and panthers' heart washed down with a barrel of rattlers' pizon, and I got the meanness of 'em all. And I'm comin' at you."

The two men met with a shock that threw them struggling to the ground in each other's grasp. The crowd closed in, yelling like savages, striving to see through the cloud of dust that covered the combatants. Their noise drowned the "nuff" that came from the Kentuckian, but they saw David stagger to his feet, and then the Kentuckian sat up and fumbled with grimy, trembling hand at the eyeball that

lay on his cheek below the ghastly socket. For a moment there was a stunned silence, then the vanquished man gave a dreadful shriek of pain and terror.

The crowd surged about David and lifted him to their shoulders. They bore him to the tavern, shouting a barbaric paean of victory that yet was not loud enough to drown the shrill screams of the former bully of Jefferson County.

In the tavern David reached for the noggin of whiskey that was thrust out at him from the wall of faces and drank greedily. The raw white liquor seared his throat and flooded his brain. Hammers' screams were inaudible now, but they still accused him from someplace toward the back of his brain. He held up the noggin and it was filled by hands that seemed unattached to any body. He downed the liquor noisily. If only the ululating crowd would go away and leave him alone. He rose unsteadily to his feet, but for some reason they would not carry him away. Very well, he would stay. He sank to his chair again and dropped his head upon his arms.

The crowd buzzed with disappointment and melted away. His head was whirling with liquor and remorse, but a part of his brain seemed to be thinking steadily, inexorably. It was not his will, he knew, for it was laying open his soul to the light of day. He was running away, it pointed out pitilessly, from the nameless feeling of guilt and depression that had haunted him during the Bible reading days of his imprisonment. "This delectable country," said the voice of Daniel Strong, "and all its gardens, and orchards, and vineyards, and fountains of water wherein we drink and wash ourselves are Immanuel's and we are his sheep, for whom he laid down his life." No, he was not fleeing from the government but from a greater power. To escape from that he had wounded the girl he loved and brutalized himself below the level of a beast. And it was

not the voice of Daniel Strong that spoke to him but the voice of conscience.

David raised a haggard face and called thickly for whiskey. "Good whiskey," he amended.

A girl brought the whiskey and set it before him, then sat down in a chair across the table. David took the noggin and drank slowly. It was a better aged liquor and its smoothness seemed to drown the voice of conscience and bring him back to earth. His will power returned and assured him that he would never yield. He had chosen his road and would go on, in spite of hell and high water. Perhaps, he mused, what he needed was a woman. He remembered, with a pang of drunken regret for lost opportunities, that he had not had one for more than two years. His eyes rose over the rim of the noggin and took in the girl across the table. He set the vessel down with a crash.

It was Arcola de Cavalini.

She was regarding him with that gaze that he remembered so well, saying nothing, but looking at him with staring eyes as if she wanted to tell him something but could not. He had the feeling that this had happened before, and when she reached down beside her and lifted his white hunting shirt to the table he remembered. It had been when he had found her standing at the foot of the liberty pole the evening after his return from New Orleans. He tried to focus his eyes more narrowly. She was wearing a loose, high-wasted dress, of figured cambric, and her black hair was long and piled on her head in a Grecian knot. Evidently she had been prospering. A little thinner perhaps, but still the same Arcola—good enough for a gentleman officer, he recalled. Well, by God, he was as much a gentleman as any officer.

The girl stirred and her eyes fell before his. "I've never

forgotten you, David," she said softly. "Nothing can *ever* make me forget you."

David said nothing, but his eyes were lighted with the kindling fires of desire.

"I've waited for you, David," she said. "I knew you'd come back to the river some day. It's in your blood, just like it's in your blood to live hard and fast while you're young."

In the shaft of golden light cast by the sinking sun her eyes seemed purple-black, like haws. There was tragedy in those eyes, the tragedy of a woman who was loved often but never deeply. David cursed silently. The boys he had known had sought her out for the pert tilt of her head and the vivacity in her narrowed French eyes, but with him she had never laughed. No woman ever laughed with him. They seemed to come to him like nuns bearing lighted tapers to their prayers. Perhaps that was why they had meant so much to him. There was no pleasure, he had heard, like that with a woman who loved one.

He rose and kicked the chair from under him, then steadied himself on the table. The girl took him by the arm and led him slowly up the stairs to her room. It was a large room, David noted, and well furnished for that of a tavern wench. The furniture was imported and there was a rug on the floor and pictures on the wall. In one corner hung the silver crucifix that Arcola's mother had brought from France and below it was the prie-dieu with candle, prayer book, and red velvet cushion.

David sank heavily into a chair just as there came a sharp knock at the door. Arcola crossed the room and opened the door slightly. David heard the protesting whine of the Gallic landlord and the girl's sharp reply. The door closed abruptly. David stood up unsteadily and fumbled with his hunting shirt.

"I'm not staying where I'm not wanted," he said.

Arcola laid a detaining hand on his arm. "But you are wanted here, David," she said. "I entertain anyone I please, and if M'sieu Albret does not like it I'll go elsewhere."

David sat down again. A negro girl entered with a tray of food and a bottle of whiskey and Arcola busied herself setting out the food on the table. "Eat," she said. "Then you'll feel better."

David sat up to the table and ate while Arcola sat opposite and picked at her food and watched him. Soon he would be in her arms, she told herself, and at the thought her heart seemed to flutter into her throat and close away her breath until at last she regained it with a long choking sigh. She had always known they would meet again, even after she had lost her desperate throw that night when she had asked him to marry her. Now that he was back she must play the game cautiously, not like the naïve girl of two years back. Men were easy to frighten away; they must be bound imperceptibly with the gossamer threads of passion and habit, thinking always that they could escape if they willed, until the final moment when freedom seemed a small price to pay for the retention of their bonds.

Twilight fell over the world outside and shadows crept from the corners of the room, but Arcola made no move to light a candle. The whiskey fell lower in the bottle and their pulses quickened as it fell, as if they were racing to some mad climax. Arcola poured the last of the amber whiskey into David's glass and pushed it toward him. She raised her own glass.

"To us—tonight," she said.

David lifted his glass shakily and looked across at her with burning eyes.

"Tonight—and many nights," he said.

Arcola rose and stood in the middle of the room as if

seeking the dim light that came uncertainly through the window. She fumbled with the fastenings of her dress and twisted her shoulders within its folds, then raised her arms above her head. The familiar gesture summoned the blood to David's head with a thrum that seemed to come across all time and space, and he watched with a gaze that spoke the famine of two years spent with books and prison. The girl's body swayed and her clothing fell in a heap at her feet. She stood revealed, softly luminous and seductive. David lurched forward with hungry hands outstretched and found her arms extended to guide him to their shelter.

Chapter 38

FOUR TIMES THAT SUMMER AND FALL THE BRADDEES walked the "Elzie" from Louisville to Cincinnati with supplies for the garrison at Fort Washington or for the regiments that remained at Wayne's chain of forts in the interior. David lost his prison pallor and became reddened with exposure; work at the pole and the oars made his muscles as hard as his soul. At both ends of the run men learned to listen for his shrill "kr-r-r-r" as soon as he had downed a few drinks, and the ferocious glee with which he whipped the unfortunates who stood up to him, came at length to appall even the unthinking barbarians of the river towns. Before long he noticed that when he began "I rub my shoulders on the stars," men hastily gulped their whiskey and sidled away. Even Big Matt, whose kindly soul had long ago become used to the brutality of frontier life, gently reminded him that "live and let live" was a better motto than "dog eat dog."

Sometimes during David's night watch—cautious rivermen still kept a weather eye open for Indians even after Wayne's treaty at Greenville—he would see his life spread out before him like a great scroll from which he could read. The nineteen years or so of his early life were distant now and covered by a mist; he seemed never to have thought during those years, only to have felt. Time had glided smoothly by without thought of past, present, or future, and life had held no problems beyond being able to hold his own with women, and whiskey, and gouging. Then had come that fateful day in May, 1793, when a sense of life's

complications had struck him like a blow between the eyes. Starr, and Gurdon Thorne, and Daniel Strong, and Lawyer Brackenridge had entered his life with all the things they had meant. He had tried, since his release from prison, to drive them all from his life and find his way back to simplicity, but somehow the glimpses he had had of a larger world stayed with him. And the burden that he had brought with him from outside clung to him inexorably. Run as he might it was always there, pressing down upon his shoulders like the great pack that Christian had borne in the *Pilgrim's Progress*.

Sooner or later, he knew, he would have to stop running. He would have to stand up and conquer or be conquered. The inevitability of the coming time of decision fascinated him and there were times when he was impatient to meet it. He would show whatever gods there were that he was master of his own life. Only one crumb of comfort would he grant them—he would go back to Starr. She had told him to go, but there had been confidence in her voice that he would return. And she was right in that, David knew, for her haunted eyes still burned into his soul; they had seemed to come between him and Arcola as they had once two years before, and every time he returned to Louisville it had taken more whiskey to drive them away. Well, what could a man expect when he had given his solemn word to a woman? It was only fair that she should haunt him when he sinned against her. He would go back and put it up to Starr. Either she would go West with him or he would tell her to forget him. There couldn't be much doubt of her choice.

And then Big Matt contracted to take a cargo of hides, copper, glazed gunpowder, and cotton to Pittsburgh. The night before they were to leave David sought Arcola at Monsieur Albret's Cross Keys Tavern. Half a dozen cus-

tomers were loafing in the tavern with their feet propped on the tables and streams of tobacco juice issuing from their mouths to the sanded floor. Ma'mselle de Cavalini was engage', said the Frenchman with smooth dislike. Perhaps if he care' to wait, zare was a table in ze corner and a bottle of m'sieu's favorite wheeskey was at hand.

An hour later an expensively dressed foreigner came down the stairs, threw a gold coin nonchalantly upon the bar, and sauntered out stroking his pointed black beard with the air of a man who had the world by the tail. Albret sidled up to David's table and pretended to polish it with a greasy cloth. Ze gentleman, he volunteered with a covert sneer at David, was Don Luis Megarrity, colonel of the Louisiana regiment, who was in Kaintuckee on beeziness wiz General Wilkinson. Ma'mselle de Cavalini had been favor' repeatedly by ze don's visits, an' he had taken such a fancy to her zat he wanted her to return to New Orleans wiz him.

David stood up and extended one reddened paw to the scruff of the Frenchman's shirt collar, then with the other he dropped in his moist quid of tobacco. The landlord writhed with rage and mortification while the customers hooted with barbaric glee. David left the taproom without a backward glance and ascended the dark stairway to Arcola's room. She answered his tap and silently held the door open for him to enter. She wore a dressing gown of pastel purple and her heavy black hair hung over her shoulders in artful disarray. David stood with his back against the door.

"I've come to say good-bye," he said.

Arcola's hand was raised unconsciously to her breast and she looked up at him with a cloud of fear in her eyes.

"You mean—for good?"

David nodded. "I'm going back to Pittsburgh to get

married. That is—to get married.” He could not tell her that he was running away with another man’s wife.

“Is it anyone I know?”

David shook his head. “She moved in since you left,” he lied.

Arcola took him by the hand and led him to a chair by the table where a candle was burning and seated herself opposite. A decanter of canary and a couple of wine-stained glasses stood between them.

“I had hopes—for myself,” she said presently with a wistful smile, then added quickly, “but if it is not to be—.”

She smiled again, then filled the wine glasses, and, as if conscious of David’s distaste for Don Luis, pushed her own glass across the table. David cared little for wine, but he lifted the glass while he watched Arcola sip hers. It came back to him that it had been with a wine glass in her hand that he had seen Starr in the assembly room of Ormsby’s tavern the night he had entered there to return her riding mask. Starr, thin and sallow, with pale hair, and tragic, intensely blue eyes that seemed always ready to weep. The vision of Starr wrung his heart even as he wondered if he loved her. If only he had never given his word to her.

Arcola was so different, so straight and dark and self-reliant, with a beauty that had ripened during the past two years. He wondered if she had had many opportunities to marry. Doubtless she had, for wives were in demand in the West, and few cared what a woman’s past had been. The man that married her would be lucky. But most likely she would never marry. She would probably go to New Orleans with this Megarrity, save her money, and eventually set up a high-class shebang or perhaps retire to a small cottage on the outskirts of the city.

David came back slowly to the room and saw Arcola looking at him across the candle flame.

"When are you leaving?" she said.

"In the morning."

"You will stay with me tonight?"

David nodded. The girl drank the last of her wine and rose. This would be such a night as had never been before, she told herself, and once it had passed, David Braddee would be no more able to forget her than she was to forget him.

* * * * *

When the "Elzie" left Limestone, two hundred miles up the Ohio from Louisville, the glory of the autumn leaves had passed. They had gone, thought David, harking back to *Pilgrim's Progress*, like the grace of God abandoning the heart of a sinful man. They lay now, lifeless and dull, upon the ground or hung upon the shriveled limbs of the trees, rustling in the breeze like the whisperings of the sinner's conscience.

A great weight of guilt and foreboding hung over David's mind and made him gloomy and irritable. Time after time as he bent to the pole he found himself brooding upon the summer that had fled without having brought him peace. Sometimes a moment seemed to draw closer, swelling as it came, and roaring like the wings of a great bird in flight. Within that moment he would muse, and hold conversations with Starr, or Lawyer Brackenridge, or the sloe-eyed girl, and once Old Tom seemed to come back to him. Then the moment would pass and he would see by his position that he had been gone but an instant. Or perhaps the moment might stretch on until he would be awakened by a push from the man behind him or Big Matt's shout from the upping block. He never knew how long these spells

would last when he yielded to them, and more than once, during his watch at night, he knew by the position of the flotsam on the river or by the clouds in the sky that they had stretched on for many minutes. It was dangerous, he knew, to relax his alertness when on watch, but the craving was like that of an insomniac for sleep. Only by sinking into the arms of this stupor could he escape the nameless feelings of guilt and self-reproach that weighed him down.

Near the mouth of the Scioto the "Elzie" passed the great rock known as the Watch Tower. Here, since the beginning of the Indian wars, the savages had kept desultory watch for immigrant boats and here hundreds of settlers had perished or been captured. Several times during its voyages the "Elzie" had been fired upon from the shore, but it was Big Matt's boast that no man of his crew had ever been killed. By 1795 Wayne's treaty with the Indians had taken most of the tribesmen from the warpath, but there were still a few hostiles hanging about the river. Old habit was strong, however, and they made most of their raids near the Watch Tower. Once that place had been left astern every man on the "Elzie" breathed more freely, for, in spite of the vast stretches of unsettled territory above and below the great rock, they were comparatively safe from attack.

A day's pole above the Watch Tower Big Matt stopped for the night at the upper end of Walnut Reach and tied the boat to a clump of willows so that it rode about ten feet below the foot of an islet. Lank had been roasting a haunch of venison over the fire in the sand box and baking dodgers in the ashes, so that the food was ready for the men the instant the boat was fast. After supper, because it was too dark to play cards or roll dice, they sat around the top of the cargo box and told tales of Jack the Giant Killer and Little Billy Earthquake. Then, they rolled up in their blankets on the cargo box and went to sleep.

David had been assigned the first watch and he sat at the stern end of the cargo box with his rifle resting beside him, motionless save for the grinding of his jaws and the occasional jerk of his head as he spat over the side. The dark water rippled around the sides of the island and threw itself with a soft gurgle against the sides of the "Elzie." A boatman snored and one of his mates gave him a vigorous kick in the shins. The man cursed and rolled over. The silver disc of the moon edged up into the sky and sent a jagged beam across the water of the reach and a screech owl raised its nostalgic quaver in homage to the lord of the night.

A hoarse whicker sounded from the northern shore, evidently a raccoon with a sore throat. It had been three years, mused David, since he had been coon hunting. Well, there wouldn't be much time for that this winter, either. In another six or eight weeks he'd be coming down the river with Starr, and he'd be under the necessity of finding some way of earning a living for them since boating with Big Matt would be impossible. Time and space seemed to be reduced to a pin point and then widened out into eternity. He traveled down the Mississippi in his mind seeking a place to settle.

New Orleans was good, especially at certain seasons, and there was always life and gayety there. But he was not cut out for gayety and the city was low and unhealthy in the midst of its oppressive circle of lush, mysterious swamps. Natchez, he decided, was best. It was high and healthy and the weather there was well nigh perfect except for a few months in the heat of summer. Perhaps he could obtain employment for a while as clerk with an American trader. But not for long. He would have a business of his own soon, with a town house and a plantation. Cotton, they said, was a right good crop there and there should be a demand

for it since the invention of the newfangled engine for seeding it.

He dreamed of himself and Starr riding along the sunken buffalo trails that served as roads, with the fragrant pinkness of crabapple blossoms arching above them. The girl turned her laughing face toward him and he saw that it was not Starr, but Arcola. He forgot that he was in a dream and searched frantically for the reason. Starr! It must be Starr! He had never known before that he loved her so much. Not Arcola, nor a thousand Arcolas, could take the place of that love that had twined itself about his life until it seemed that his heart would stop beating without its support.

The trance dissolved in an iridescent bubble and he was back on the cargo box of the "Elzie." The moon was higher now and its trail across the water was as broad as a table where the edge of the boat cut it off. His body was moist with sweat in spite of the chill autumn air and he was in the act of reaching for his blanket to throw it over his shoulders when he saw a queer forked shadow rise into the belt of moonlight.

David threw himself quickly to the deck and seized his rifle. Before he had reached the deck planks a bullet whizzed over his head and a Mingo war whoop resounded over the boat at the same moment that David raised a warning yell. A dark figure sprang from the prow to the cargo box and David brought it down with a rifle shot. The boat rocked under the weight of savages heaving themselves from the water to the running boards. The blanketed mounds on the cargo box stirred into life.

"Hug the deck," shouted David. "Use your tomahawks."

The top of the cargo box was barely five feet above the deck and it had only been David's glimpse of the eagle feathers that had kept the redskins from ranging themselves

along the running boards, where they could have tomahawked every man in his sleep. Now they had to fight at a disadvantage, for the boatmen could chop off the fingers groping on the edge of the box or reach down and strike at the figures creeping along the running boards to surround the crew. Two of the boatmen who disregarded David's warning and sprang upright were brought down by shots from the islet. One of them whom David took to be Lank fell over the heads of the crouching Indians into the river and the other lay bleeding quietly on the deck.

Their only salvation, David saw, was to cut the boat loose and let it drift out of range of the rifles on shore.

"Someone at the bow," he called. "Cut the painter. It's our only chance."

A figure rolled off the cargo box to obey. David struck down at a face whose every streak of paint was clear in the moonlight. There was a surprised groan as the face disappeared and a body plunged into the water. A flame crackled on shore.

"The redsticks got me, boys," came Big Matt's voice. "I can't cut her loose." His voice trailed away in a hoarse gurgle, then in a high, strained tone came the words, "Save yourselves."

There was a shrill, low whistle as a knife sought his windpipe and a moment later an Indian raised a whoop of triumph from the prow and sprang to the unguarded end of the cargo box, holding something aloft in his left hand. David's hand went back and his tomahawk hurtled through the air and caught the Indian full in the naked chest. The savage shrieked and fell headlong into the river.

"Jump for your lives," shouted David. "The south shore."

David tumbled over the head of an Indian and fell on his side in the water. When he came to the surface he was swimming toward the southern shore. A bullet struck the

water a few feet away and David dove and swam under the surface for a distance. When he came up he heard a thrashing in the river behind him, but the sounds of the struggle soon died away either because one of the combatants had been knifed or because he had swum out of hearing. Weighted as he was by his hunting shirt David found swimming difficult, but he did not propose to discard a much needed garment unless it became necessary in order to save his life. Accordingly he turned on his back and floated downstream, moving his hands only to keep himself afloat and to steer himself toward the south shore.

The yells of the victorious savages were barely audible when David's feet struck bottom near the end of the reach. He clambered ashore and scrambled up the steep bank. The first thing he did was to find an open space, then he removed his clothes, except for his shoes, and jumped around in the chill air to dry himself. His hand came in contact with the smoothness of the winespot below his navel and he smiled grimly. Tomahawks were playing a bigger part in his life than he would have been willing to admit a few hours back.

Meanwhile the "Elzie" was lit by torches as the savages ran about the deck or rolled bales and boxes out of the cargo box. If only one of those torches would come into contact with a powder keg it would be the end of the boat and her captors. His savage curse was a prayer that his wish might be granted. Not only the loss of the "Elzie," he reflected bitterly, but the death of nine men, three of them his own kin, lay at his door. Old Tom had been right in complaining of the bad woodcraft of the younger generation. The hoarseness in the whicker of that coon would have been a dead give-away to an old timer, but even without that warning David knew that he should never have let the redsticks get to the islet, let alone creep in the water

along the sides of the "Elzie" until they were ready to clamber aboard.

He was safe enough, David knew, for the savages would take it for granted that anyone who had escaped would already be on their way to Limestone, sixty miles or more down the Ohio. Then and there David resolved not to go downstream but to strike out across the three hundred miles that lay between him and McKee's Rocks. He had no food, and no weapon save his knife, but he knew that he could eat the nuts that carpeted every woodland path, and if he craved meat he could catch all the rabbits he wanted in twitch-ups. The only danger would come from prowling redskins, and in his present state of mind David felt like welcoming them. Perhaps a knife in his throat would be easier than to have to tell Thomasina that she had lost husband, brother, and nephew at one blow.

Suddenly there was a blinding glare as the "Elzie" burst into a thousand flaming pieces and the next instant the sound of the explosion reached David's ears. In his glee at the vanquishment of the victors David forgot his perilous position and whooped and yelled while he danced naked in his sodden shoes.

All at once he dived for the limb where his clothes had been spread out to dry and jerked his knife from its sheath. Silently he worked his way to the overhanging bank and peered down. Yes, a figure had emerged from the water and was standing uncertainly on the bank between David and the blazing hulk of the "Elzie." George Pancake! David called to him and the next moment was reaching a hand down to the only other survivor of the "Elzie." There would be one less absence, at any rate, to explain to Thomasina when he reached home.

Chapter 39

LAWYER BRACKENRIDGE DROPPED HIS FEET FROM HIS DESK and stood up between his rack of overstuffed pigeon holes on the left and his sagging bookshelves on the right. His eyes were still on the young man in the stained white hunting shirt who might have been taken for a ghost had it not been for the weatherbeaten red of his face and the unghostlike auburn of his hair.

"David Braddee, by the eternal!" exclaimed the lawyer.

"Of course," said David. "Why not?" He spoke tonelessly, almost like a man in a dream, and he sank into a chair with a world-weariness that was not lost on Brackenridge.

"Why," answered the lawyer, "because an army boat came in two days ago with word that the 'Elzie' had been burned to the water's edge and everyone on board killed or captured by Indians."

"George Pancake and I escaped," replied David simply. "We came across country, but could not take turns at walking and sleeping like the soldiers do at rowing and sleeping."

"And everyone else was lost?"

"Everyone," said David. "The boat blew up while the Injuns were still aboard, and I doubt if any of them escaped, either."

Brackenridge felt the embarrassment of one who must express sympathy with a bereaved person but is afraid of being thought mawkish. He groped perceptibly for words, then burst forth:

"Well, there wasn't a bigger-hearted man on the river than Matt Braddee."

David looked at him gratefully and nodded. That was exactly the way Big Matt would have chosen to be remembered.

"Aunt Seena says that Dad left a will with you, Mr. Brackenridge," said David.

Brackenridge opened a drawer and fumbled with the papers until he found the one he wanted.

"The will is simple enough, David," he said. "He divides his McKee's Rocks farm into as many portions as there are surviving children, but gives the sons the right to buy the daughters' shares at a price agreed on among them, or failing an agreement, at a price set by the executor, who is myself, and two justices of the peace from Moon Township."

"I wish to surrender my share," said David. "That will leave Dick, and Gertie, and Elzie."

"But you are specifically mentioned in the will as an heir."

David shook his head slowly and there was a look in his eyes that the lawyer thought that he read as horror.

"I can't take it, Mr. Brackenridge."

"Very well, David, if you can't, you can't. I suppose there's no use asking you why you are making this strange decision?"

"Because I killed Big Matt and all the rest," said David tonelessly.

"What? You—. Oh, come now."

"I was on watch," said David. "I failed to heed the signs, and let the redskins creep up and even get aboard the boat before I gave the warning. Dad was killed trying to cut the painter."

The lawyer bit his nails and studied the stolid countenance that covered such a burden of grief and remorse.

"Does anyone else know of this?" he asked.

"Only George."

"He'll never let it out, and neither will I," said Brackenridge. "It's no good me telling you now, David, that when we run away from trouble we always get ourselves in deeper. The thing for you to do is to return to your books. A useful life can yet expiate your crime."

David jumped to his feet. His face was flaming even redder than his weather-beaten skin.

"Return to my books!" he shouted. "Return to my books, with the death of eight men on my conscience. I can't do it, I tell you. I'd go mad."

"Now, David," soothed Brackenridge, "you are responsible, we grant that, but you can't make things better by refusing to look life in the face."

"I'll look it in the face, all right," returned David viciously. "I'm not through yet."

"But not that way, David," pled the lawyer. "Not as you value your immortal soul. Bow to the wind and let it pass over. There's nothing to be gained by defiance and hatred."

David turned on the lawyer with a touch of the venom that was corroding his soul.

"How can I resign my share of the property?" he asked.

"Make affidavit before Prothonotary Thorne."

David opened the door of the sanctum, then turned to the lawyer.

"I'm not insensible of your kindness, Mr. Brackenridge," he said, "but this is my problem and I'll thank you to leave me alone. I think I'll begin by getting drunk."

When he emerged from the sanctum Tarleton Bates was sitting by his old desk. As David went out Bates looked after him for a moment with eyes troubled by more than the



fact that he had not been recognized by so much as a nod. He turned and looked at Brackenridge, then stood up.

"Mr. Brackenridge," he said, "for some time I have wanted to tell you that your dream of a literate democracy has become mine as well. What can I do to help bring it to pass?"

* * * * *

David walked into the Greentree Tavern, where several farmers and boatmen were gathered over their matutinal drinks at the bar.

"Set up whiskey for the crowd, Sam," he said to the colored bartender. Sam hastened to obey and David, noggin in hand, turned to the loafers.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I'm going to propose a toast. Here's to the man that went to sleep on guard and lost the good keel 'Elzie' to the Injuns, with eight of the best rivermen that ever bent a hickory pole or cocked a leg over a steering oar. Gentlemen, I give you David Braddee."

There were audible gasps from some of the men and they held their mugs before their faces as if their arms were paralyzed. David looked around with an air of cynical amusement.

"Well," he said as he tilted his noggin to his lips, "you'll pardon me for drinking to myself since no one else will."

A boatman set down his mug heavily on the bar and stalked from the taproom. One by one the other men followed his example, without a word and without a backward glance. David watched the last man depart, then turned with a defiant grin to the negro bartender, whose eyes were staring from a face that had become ashen gray.

"What's the matter, Sam?" he said. "Haven't you ever seen a murderer before?"

David ranged the abandoned mugs on the edge of the

bar and squinted down the line to see that they were perfectly aligned. Then, with an air of determination worthy of a better cause, he began to empty them, one by one, down his gullet.

* * * * *

By evening David had decided that it would take more than whiskey to make him drunk. His steps faltered slightly, his hand shook when he lifted his liquor, and even his brain seemed a little fuddled, but somewhere in the back of his head rang the accusing voice of his conscience. Running again, it told him, running from God and running from life. Afraid to face the facts. Seeking refuge in whiskey and unreason.

David rose noisily and made his way out of the tavern. The chill of winter was in the air and he turned the cape of his hunting shirt up to protect his neck. Just a year ago that day, it suddenly occurred to him, he had given himself up to go to prison in Philadelphia. A year taken out of his life as if he had nothing but years to give. Well, did he? He looked ahead, down the corridor of his life, and groaned at the thought of the weary procession of years. Fifty or more of them if he was unlucky. He coughed suddenly and drew the cape of his hunting shirt closer. That three hundred miles through the wilderness without even a blanket to roll in at night hadn't done him any good. Now that he thought of it he'd been coughing occasionally ever since his return from Philadelphia. In spite of his bravado a chill seemed to strike him at the memory of Old Tom's last illness. He'd hate to go the same way, coughing out his lungs before he died.

He stood in front of Gurdon Thorne's house and thumped the knocker noisily. A clean-cut young negro man opened the door.

"I want to see Captain Thorne," said David,

"Cap'n Thorne not in just now, suh," said the boy, "but you can wait in here for him."

David entered the office and sank into the brocaded easy chair. The negro went out and there was no sound save the ticking of the clock on the mantle. Then there was a swishing of skirts and Starr was looking down at him from a great height, with an aura about her head as if she were an angel in heaven. David bent over and took her skirt in his hand and kissed it.

"I'm drunk," he said thickly.

Starr's cool hands smoothed his forehead. "I know," she said gently, "and I know why."

"Eight men dead," said David. "The town despises me for a coward."

"That will pass," said Starr. "You have your life before you. You must show them what you really are."

"What am I?"

"You will be a great man—a lawyer, a statesman, whatever you wish."

David slumped back despondently. "Do you know how fast news travels on the river? Within a month what I did will be known from here to New Madrid. I am going West, I tell you. To the Arkansas, perhaps, where I can hide forever."

"David," said the girl quietly, "you can't do this. You must stay and fight it out. The more you run away, the more the devil will drive you."

"You must come with me," continued David, unheeding of her plea.

"But I can't, David," answered Starr. "I can't be a partner to your running away like this from everything worth while."

David struggled to his feet, his face an ugly mask. "You

mean you don't want me unless I am successful," he sneered. "Unless I am a great lawyer like Brackenridge, or a gentleman like—like your husband."

The girl flinched as if he had struck her. "No, no, David," she protested. "It isn't that at all. It's simply that I can't let you ruin your life by running away."

"You are right," pursued David. "I can't give you what you want unless I am rich and famous. Gurdon Thorne can give you everything. He's the man for a woman like you."

"David!" cried Starr.

David lifted his hand in drunken dignity. "Madame," he said, "for the last time, will you go down river? If you don't, you can put me out of your life as I will put you out of mine."

Starr stood silent, imploring him with her eyes, but David obdurately refused to yield.

"Your answer!" he said.

"David, I can't—"

"Very well, leave me. I am here on business with your husband."

Starr cast a last imploring look at him, then turned and left the room. It seemed to her that all hope was being left behind as she crossed the threshold and slowly closed the door. She sank on a chair and buried her face in her arms on the table. It was not too late to go back and throw herself in David's arms and tell him she would go to the ends of the earth with him. She was startled by a realization of the sureness with which she had made the decision, and frightened by a sense of its irrevocability. It could not have been she who had done it, cloistered as she was from the world and untutored in its ways. But the decision was right, she knew. If David did not have the strength to conquer now he never would. He would become an embitt-

tered, hateful man, and even if she went with him, it would be only a matter of time before they came to hate each other. It was better with Gurdon Thorne. There, at least, there was no love turned to hatred.

There were voices in the office now. Gurdon must have returned. Starr sat up and dried her eyes. She could not afford to let him see her weeping, especially when David had just been in the house. She went into the kitchen and bathed her eyes while Coffeen, the negro lad, and his sister, Lexie, looked on sympathetically. Lexie was a coffee-colored girl in her 'teens, who was so far gone with child that the trimness which had been her chief attraction was no longer apparent. She was, moreover, such a quiet and dependable girl that Starr had wondered how she could have allowed herself to get into trouble. It was a question Starr had hesitated to probe; and when she thought of the hour she had spent bound in the bedroom closet just before Buttercup's disappearance a year before, she feared that she knew the answer.

Starr returned to the dining room and took up a napkin she had been hemming. The outer door of the office closed with a bang, and Starr heard Gurdon's heavy, unsteady step as he walked back across the office to the door of the dining room. He was in the room now and walking toward her.

"I have news for you," he said.

Starr looked up, and a startled flush suffused her face. Now he will begin again about David, she thought, and waited as if for a blow. But David Braddee had already been dismissed from Gurdon Thorne's thoughts. Nothing seemed to hang there very long of late, and one glance at him was sufficient to explain the reason. During the past year he had aged a score of years. His hair was streaked with gray, the lines on his face had become depressions, and his eyes

stared as if they were always watching horrible sights. He went to the sideboard and poured a drink of whiskey. His trembling hands spilled as much of the liquor upon the tray as they poured into the glass. He downed the drink at a gulp and seemed to obtain a firmer grip on himself.

"I have resigned my office," he said. "By request—if it's any comfort to you."

* * * * *

Thomasina stripped the last shred of meat from the turkey's breastbone and held the bone up for the family to see. It was dark at the point but about halfway back it lightened and at the other end it was white.

"The fore part of the winter will be freezing cold," she said. "The rest of it will be balmy as spring."

"Winter's already begun," said George. "It don't take no turkey bone to tell that."

David rose from the table and went outside. Inconsequential chatter drove him frantic. Aunt Seena was not as mean as before; three deaths in the family had sort of taken some of the pizon out of her. But David wanted to forget—to forget about prison, and death on the river, and most of all about Starr. That last hadn't been as simple as he had expected. Though he fought against the thought, he knew that he had been viciously unreasonable; perhaps his affair with Arcola had made him eager to justify himself by finding that Starr was unfaithful and to seek to punish himself by gathering up every crumb of misery and forcing it down his own throat.

David picked up his blankets from a bench before the door and took a tin cup from a nail. Then he walked to an outhouse and selected a keg, which he carried to the lee of the haystack beside the barn. He burrowed a hole in the hay and spread the blankets out, then arranged a place

for the keg. The spigot would be just right to his hand so that he could fill his tin cup without moving. He was going to get drunk this time, by God, if it took the whole eight gallons and a week to do it.

Chapter 40

BILLY PANCAKE STOOD IN FRONT OF DAVID'S BURROW.
"A nigger to see you, Dave," he said briefly, and stepped aside.

David focussed his bleary eyes as best he could and recognized the young negro man that had answered his knock at Thorne's.

"I'm Coffeen, suh," said the negro. "Cap'n Thorne's boy."

"What do you want?" growled David.

"Cap'n Thorne's lookin' for a man to take his Kentucky boat down river to Natchez."

"Oh, so he's decided he's had enough of Pittsburgh?"

"Yes, suh—I dunno, suh."

"Well," said David, "there's plenty to go for hire."

"Nossuh, Mistuh Braddee," said the negro. "The Allegheny's frozen all the way up and lak to bust any minute. Ain't nobody willin' to take a chanct."

"Let Thorne run his own boat," said David. "I wouldn't hold out a finger to help him out of hell."

"It's not Cap'n Thorne sent me, suh," replied the negro earnestly. "It was Miz Starr."

"Starr!" cried David. He laid back on his rumpled blankets and shouted with laughter. A supreme joke, by Jupe! Now she was begging *him* to go down river. Madame Holier-than-thou had changed her tune mighty quick this trip. Well, by the great fire, he'd just take her on. God, what a chance to show up that puling wreck of a husband that she preferred to him. Every time she looked at either

of them she could eat crow and like it, all the way down the river to Natchez.

David recovered from his fit of savage jubilation.

"Billy," he said to the Pancake boy, "go and throw everything I got left into a war bag. Here, Coffeen, give me a hand. I got to get sobered up."

With the help of the negro lad David walked down to the river bank. The water was low and a crust of ice along the edge showed that it had fallen within a few days, while between the Rocks and the island he could see that the main channel was flecked with ice. David stripped off his clothes and tumbled into the icy cold water. The shock did him good and after he had climbed out and danced about in the air and beaten his chest and limbs he felt almost like a new man. He was even hungry and he sat down with relish to the stack of corn cakes that Thomasina had waiting for him when he reached the kitchen.

Thorne was sorting papers in his office when David entered with Coffeen. He looked up irritably from his task.

"What do you want?"

"I hear you want a boatman to take you to Natchez."

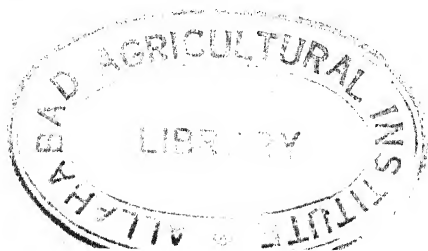
"Yes," answered Thorne. "I'll give any pilot a hundred dollars to get me there—even you. The boatmen in Pittsburgh are a pack of white-livered cowards. They're afraid of the ice breaking up."

David snorted. Any man that tried to run the river with an ice pack snapping at his stern was a fool. But then he, David Braddee, was a fool, and had no call to abuse another fool.

"Do you have a crew?" asked David.

"No. I told you the boatmen are a pack of cowards."

"Well, don't get uppity. Can I depend on you to help work the boat?"



"Yes, and here's Coffeen, too. And Lexie will do for another hand. She's a stout enough girl."

Coffeen's eyes opened with amazement but he said nothing, and David, who knew nothing of Lexie's pregnancy and saw nothing unusual in a woman managing a sweep, was satisfied.

"When are you leaving?" he said.

"Anytime," replied Thorne. "Everything's aboard the boat and I have only to give possession of the household furniture to various purchasers."

"Can you leave in an hour?"

"I think so."

"Where is the boat?"

"Just upstream from the foot of Smithfield Street. Mrs. Thorne and the servant girl are on it."

The boat was roofed over for about two-thirds of its length and the well in the front of the boat was roofed by a tarpaulin that covered most of the space between the gunnels save for a small portion near the cabin door and the ladder that led to the deck. David lifted a corner of the tarpaulin and saw that the space beneath was stacked with crates of wagon wheels, axles, plows, and other farm equipment. He turned and entered the cabin. Starr was building a fire in the brick fireplace to take the chill off the cramped quarters that served as living and sleeping room, and Lexie was sitting on a keg sewing a patch on a pair of woolen breeches. David grinned sardonically at Starr.

"I see we're going down river after all," he said.

Starr looked up at David for a long moment with an expression that disturbed him because of its impassivity. "Yes," she answered briefly, and gave her attention to the tiny blaze on the hearth.

David looked around at the goods piled in the cabin. There were iron plow shares, bales of sacking, coils of rope,

and bundles of hoe blades, mattock heads, axe heads, pitchforks, and other agricultural implements. From the nature of the visible equipment David judged that the chests and kegs arranged on one side for beds contained carpentering tools, nails, hinges, wire, and the other odds and ends necessary in running a plantation, and that the bags stacked across the cabin held seed and foodstuffs. A wire was stretched the length of the cabin and a curtain hung at one end ready to be pulled out to divide the room into two compartments.

David laid down his war bag and "Old Katy," the rifle that had once been Old Tom's, and went outside. In spite of the chill in the drafty cabin the atmosphere there oppressed him. He looked up at the sky, whose leaden monotony gave promise of rain. A day of rain almost anywhere along the course of the Allegheny, he reflected, would swell the river and send its crust of ice booming and crashing down into the Ohio like a white monster seeking unwary boatmen and immigrants to devour.

Gurdon Thorne came aboard well within the promised hour and gave the order to start at once.

"All right," said David, "get everybody on deck."

Lexie clambered painfully up the ladder and David turned from examining the stern oar-lock just in time to see her emerge into sight. He swung on Thorne.

"She's in no condition to work a sweep," he said.

"Why not?" answered Thorne coolly. "You can't hurt a nigger woman with work."

David eyed Thorne keenly. "There's something back of all this haste," he said slowly. "You're a fool to set off before the ice runs out of the Allegheny and I'm a fool to pilot you." His gaze swept over the half visible houses of Water Street and came back to Thorne. "I wonder," he said, "if you aren't trying to get out of the state with these niggers

before Mr. Brackenridge returns from court at Greensburg?"

"What's it to you what I'm trying to do?" answered Thorne contemptuously. "You'll get your pay. Come on, let's push off."

David slipped the cables and clambered back on deck to lend a hand in pushing off. The boat edged slowly out into the current and David took the steering oar while Thorne and Starr manned one side sweep and Coffeen and Lexie the other. David bent his chest to the steering oar and called for movement of the side sweeps as the vagaries of the current demanded.

A strange nostalgia seized him as he watched the bleak village of Pittsburgh move by with the black plumes of coal smoke from its chimneys bending before the wind of its drifting. One chapter of his life seemed to be closing, a chapter that had meant more to him, he now realized, than he had been willing to admit. That hodge-podge of draughty cabins and unpainted frame houses had meant life, and love, and a future. Now all that was passing, slipping away into the past with the Greentree Tavern, and Ormsby's, and the ruins of Fort Pitt.

Starr paced across the deck with her husband, pulling lethargically at the sweep as she gazed at the town. A strange nostalgia had seized her as she watched the familiar façade of Water Street drift by. Perhaps she was right in regretting her departure, for here she had known the greatest joy of her life—and the greatest pain as well. They seemed like an ecstatic dream now, those months when she had been waiting for David, safe in the knowledge that he had loved her. Not even the nightly terror could drown out the overtone of that consciousness. And now that time was gone. The dreams were no more, the love was no more, perhaps when they rounded the bend of the Ohio, Pitts-

burgh would be no more. There would be only her sodden husband, the hard-faced young pilot of their craft, and her broken heart to tell her that dreams had once been reality.

Gurdon Thorne paced across the deck with his wife, pulling lethargically at the sweep as he gazed at the town. A surge of vindictiveness swept through him and he raised his fist in a gesture of hatred. Four years, or a little less, in that den of bare-faced harpies had ruined him, physically, financially, and—yes—morally. He was an old man now, he who a dozen years before had been a dashing young captain in the Maryland line. This cursed Monongahela rye had done that, he reflected bitterly. It had been in league with the barbarian natives of these western mountains and had robbed him bit by bit of property and respectability and office. Perhaps it had not been altogether to blame, he acknowledged with a twinge of self-flagellation. There had been that transaction with the old woman of the inn in Lancaster. In a flash of unwonted clarity he saw that it had been that crime that had driven him to drink. He had made his initial error in thinking that his selfishness and moroseness betokened a strength of character that would enable him to defy the laws of God and man. Well, he had been fairly caught. Only whiskey could give him courage to go on with his felony, but whiskey had robbed him of its fruits.

The flatboat was now at the junction of the rivers and the cakes of ice that floated on the green current of the Allegheny thumped with muffled savagery against the sides. David found it difficult to handle the steering oar amidst the ice. He gave orders to pull in the sweeps and called Coffeen to aid him. Thorne and Lexie went below and Starr sat leaning against the ladder with closed eyes turned up to the chill winter sun. To anyone else she would have seemed forlorn, but David steeled his heart against her. She

had made her choice, he told himself doggedly; let her stand by it.

They were approaching McKee's Island now. David surrendered the steering sweep to Coffeen and he went below for "Old Katy." He brushed against Starr as he descended the ladder and again as he ascended, but she made no movement. The boat entered the dangerous channel east of the island and David kept an eye on Coffeen's steering as he fired his rifle twice. The Pancakes were standing on McKee's Rocks as the boat passed, and David saw with a grateful quickening of the heart that Dick Braddee and his wife had come across the fields to wave good-bye. The flatboat swept on and the watching figures grew dim in the distance, then were blotted from view by the trees of Montour's Island.

That night they tied up in the mouth of Sewickley Creek. When they emerged into the river the next morning the ice was much thicker, and it was only because of Thorne's insistence that David consented to go on. As it was, every person on board had to man the sweeps to keep the current from piling the boat on heaps of ice that had collected on the sandbars, and for a moment, in the turn at the mouth of the Beaver River, David was on the verge of losing control of the steering oar. It was only after they had worked back into the channel that David looked ahead of them to the bluff on the north bank and saw a group of black figures standing before the remnants of Fort McIntosh and watching the struggle. Three miles below the fort he steered for the mouth of Raccoon Creek on the south shore of the river, though the day was only half spent and they were still several miles short of the Virginia line. Thorne protested heatedly.

"I am the owner," he said angrily, "and I demand that you go on."

"You're the owner, all right," replied David contemptuously, "but in matters of navigation my word is final. We are staying here until the river is free of ice."

Three days later they pushed out of the creek and went on their way. Navigation was easier now, but the cold wind made it impossible for anyone but David to remain long on deck. When there was a tortuous channel to be negotiated he would thump on the deck and the others would swarm out to man the sweeps; then, when the emergency was past, hasten below to the fire. Evening and morning, while the women prepared the meals, the three men cut firewood and brought it on board. David took pride in his ability to stand the gruelling watch at the steering sweep and to do more than his share of the chores. Even Thorne seemed to thrive under the hardships and though he drank continually the cold and the exercise kept him sober.

On the second day after they left Raccoon Creek they passed the two villages of Buffalo and Wheeling, and the third day as they passed the Grave Creeks, David pointed out the direction of the great Indian mound that gave its name to the streams. Late that afternoon the weather suddenly moderated, and then, when David was seeking shelter for the night in a creek, the boat stuck fast on a bar.

There was nothing to do but remain there until daylight, and David undertook to keep watch. Toward morning a gust of rain came up and David roused Thorne and Coffeen. Even a slight rise in the river might send down on the helpless craft the ice gathered on bars and banks. After an hour of labor they rigged a triangular crib, which they swung in the water behind the boat to divide the floating ice and divert its force past the sides. The crib had scarcely been completed before the swell came, bringing the ice with it, but also lifting the boat from the bar and sending it on its way. David profanely breathed his relief and ran

on down the river with the ice and the flood nipping at his heels.

The next three days passed without incident, though the warm weather was soon left behind. Marietta, on its low plain at the mouth of the Muskingum, was passed and they entered upon the sparsely settled stretch of river below. The days and nights became so clear and cold that David marvelled that the river did not freeze over, and every night he chose their anchorage as if he expected that they would be forced to remain there for weeks. And then finally, on the twelfth day after they had left Pittsburgh, they arose to find that the river had frozen solid from shore to shore.

Chapter 41

THE THORNE FLATBOAT WAS TIED ON THE NORTHERN shore below a steep wooded point that thrust out sharply into an abrupt bend of the river. The bank next to the boat was level for perhaps a hundred yards along the river, but the level ground was in no place more than a couple of rods deep. Beyond it the hill rose a hundred feet in a pitch as steep as the roof of a cabin. The location was not uncomfortable, for it was protected from the north wind and there was abundant firewood close at hand. David was able, also, to bring down several deer within a few miles of the boat, and they proved to be welcome additions to the larder. The chief difficulty was that Thorne's liquor, now that he did not have to take his turn at the sweeps, got the better of him and he became completely unmanageable. Coffeen had to cut all the firewood, for David spent most of the daylight hours fishing through the ice or hunting.

The cold held for almost two weeks and the ice on the river, David calculated, was strong enough to hold a Conestoga wagon and team. Blizzards raged down the river and then came days of quiet snow that shrouded the hills and trees, and set the overladen branches to breaking with snaps that echoed like pistol shots over the ghostly valley. Then one afternoon the temperature rose and the next day rain began to fall in a steady, chilly stream that boded no good to inland mariners. After an ordinary freeze David knew that the ice would pile up on the concave side of a river bend, but the behavior of ice a foot or more thick was beyond his experience. If there was a great enough weight

of water behind it the ice might drive down the river and around the bends with a force that would sweep the valley from hill to hill. David suggested the possibility to Thorne and advised that they carry some of the goods up the hill, but Thorne scoffed at his timorousness and drew another dram from the whiskey keg. David shrugged and turned away. He did take the precaution, however, of fastening the boat to the trees on the bank with chains, and he felled two large trees upstream in the hope that they would break the force of the ice.

For two days and the intervening night the rain fell persistently, savagely, as if bent upon loosing the powers of destruction. Then on Christmas eve, a little before midnight, the ice gave way with a boom that rolled like thunder through the valley. David was out of his blanket and on deck before the echo had died away and all the others save Thorne were only a little behind him. The rain had ceased and the moonlight showed that the great expanse of ice below them was cracking and tossing as if a troop of giants were straining to break from the prison below. The flatboat broke from the ice as the swell lifted it and tugged impatiently at the chains.

The first swell passed on and they could hear the thunder of its struggle with the ice downstream. Above them the ice ground and pitched as it piled up in the bend of the river, and David fancied that he could see the wall growing ominously higher as if marshalling its strength for a descent in force.

"We'd better get ashore in a hurry," shouted David. "Pick up your clothes and what food you can. The trees will hold the ice for a while."

Thorne was still sunk in sodden slumber when David went below. David drenched his face and shoulders with a bucket of water, then picked him up and walked him out-

side. Another bucket of water dipped from the icy river roused the sputtering man to the danger they were in and he groggily lent a hand in removing the clothes and food that David thrust into his hand. Starr and Coffeen and even Lexie were working frantically to get some necessities ashore and at David's direction were propping them behind the trees some distance up the hill.

Above them the ice field was piling higher, growling like a beast restrained by a leash. David was the only one left on the boat now, and he was passing over the gunnels kegs, and coils of rope, and bundles of hardware from the cabin while the others, already ankle deep in water, carried them to the hill. There was a sudden crash and David looked up in time to see the center of the jagged line of ice leap as if struck from behind and then spread out and come pouring down the river.

"Run for your lives," shouted David. "It's coming."

He jumped over the gunnel into the water and seized a bale of blankets that he had just given Starr and tossed it toward the trees, then hurried her after it. A moment later they were climbing up from tree to tree while the water swirled and raced below them. The ice field spread swiftly over the river, but since its major force was expended on the concave shore the felled trees served their purpose in shielding the boat, until a great sheet of ice on the edge of the pack reached out and crumpled in the side.

The voyagers braced themselves behind trees, while they shivered stiff and miserable in their frozen clothes, and watched the rising waters surge by with their burden of ice. The felled trees still held above the boat, and now that the worst of the ice pack had gone by David saw a chance of saving more of the goods. Accordingly he waded out to the flatboat and handed articles over the gunnel to Thorne and Coffeen. The water rose so rapidly that he soon had to

squat down in order to keep his face above the water while he groped on the floor for the smaller articles that he knew were all they could hope to hoist up the hill.

David never knew how long they worked to save the cargo of the flatboat, but several times all three of them had to run for the hill when small packs of ice broke through the protecting trees or eddied back from the main current. When the water was well above his waist David abandoned the boat and went ashore. The water was still rising and they were under the necessity of shifting the goods higher, tree by tree, for neither strength nor time would permit them to carry them all the way up the hill. Darkness was added to their troubles when the moon went down, and the fire that David finally managed to start on top of the hill was of little aid, though it did give Starr and Lexie a chance to dry out.

Dawn came at last, but the encouragement it gave them was small. From the top of the hill they could see for miles up and down the river a narrow ribbon of grayish-green flecked with white and with bars of tumbled ice stretching here and there into its current. Thorne collapsed in a heap by the fire.

"I don't care if I lose everything I've got," he mumbled through blue lips. "I've got to sleep."

"You'd better get some sleep, too, Coffeen," said David.

Both of them had worked like Trojans, admitted David, as he took an axe and sought a pine tree. He cut down the tree and carried armfuls of the wood to the fire. Starr was sitting with her back to a tree and Lexie's head was in her lap. The slave girl was moaning in her sleep and as David came up she awoke with a scream. Her face was ashen and her body shook with a violent spasm.

"Her time must be here," said David to Starr. Starr nodded silently and David threw some fuel on the fire and

went to look at the river. Apparently it was still rising, but more slowly now, and the goods were safe for a while. David stood behind some blankets that Starr had hung on a line by the fire and took off his clothes, then rolled up in two blankets and went to sleep.

It seemed that he had scarcely closed his eyes before Starr was shaking him by the shoulder. David was awake instantly.

"David," she said, "you must help Lexie."

"Me!" exclaimed David. "I don't know anything about it. Now, if she was a cow or a mare—"

"Well, that's more than I know about," interrupted Starr.

"All right," said David. "I'll be with her as soon as I can get my clothes on."

David worked his way into his soggy clothing and went to look at Lexie.

"I reckon the first thing we'll need," he said, "is hot water."

He took a bucket and descended to the river, but before he could reach the fire again he heard Starr's voice urging him to hasten.

David laid the thin, saffron-hued little body on a piece of sacking and folded the cloth over it. He looked up at Starr.

"There's nothing more I can do," he said. "Stillborn. It's no wonder after this night."

Lexie opened her eyes. "I heard you," she said. "I'm glad." She looked up at Starr with appeal in her brown eyes. "I didn't want to do it, Miz Starr."

"I know, Lexie," said Starr. "I don't blame you."

"Miz Starr?"

"Yes, Lexie."

"Kin I hold it a little while?"

"Of course."

Starr lifted the bundle and cradled it in the slave girl's

arm. Lexie turned her head and looked at the little face, then kissed it tenderly.

"Cover it up so it won't get cold," she begged.

David walked over to Thorne and kicked him awake.

"Come on," he said. "We'll have to start shovin' that stuff up again. The water's still rising."

The men ate a few fragments of boiled venison and some cold corn bread. Thorne, David saw, avoided looking toward Lexie, though he could not have been ignorant of what had happened, and Lexie, for her part, lay silent with eyes closed.

By noon the three had managed to move most of the goods beyond the reach of any flood. Starr had broiled thick slices of ham over the fire and baked a dodger in the ashes, and she fed Lexie a little venison broth while the men ate their dinners. David took his food to the extremity of the hill and looked out over the river below. A bar composed of a tangle of trees and ice extended from the bank below him and lodged on this, perhaps fifty feet from shore, was an Orleans boat, distinguished from the Kentucky boat in which he had come down the river by being roofed over its entire length. The boat seemed to be perfectly sound and was not even listing as it would have done if it had sprung a leak. David gulped the last of his dodger and ran back to the fire.

"There's an Orleans boat stuck on the ice," he cried. "We may be able to work it off and save it."

"How can you do it?" demanded Thorne.

"I'll have to get out to it somehow," answered David, "and the rest of you will have to pull it in with ropes. Do we have any pulleys?"

"We may have saved a couple of them with the rope," answered Thorne.

The pulleys were found lashed to two coils of heavy new

rope. David gave Thorne and Coffeen instructions to fasten them to trees near the water's edge, then, mistrustful of their skill with knots he performed the task himself. He left them to run the ropes through the pulleys and tie one end of each to a tree while he cut down and trimmed a twenty-foot sapling. After that David tied the free ends of the ropes around his body and crawled out on the ice, pushing the pole crosswise ahead of him. Just as he had expected, he had not gone far before he plunged to his waist in water, but the pole caught on a couple of logs and bore him up until he could regain his footing.

He reached the boat without further accident, tossed the sapling to the deck, and clambered into the hold at an open window. The cargo consisted of row upon row of kegs of flour—well over four hundred of them, David calculated hastily. A hurried inspection convinced him that the craft was water-tight.

"She's sound in wind and limb," he muttered. "Now to get her free."

He ascended to the deck through the trapdoor. The boat's sweeps, he noted with relief, lay ready to hand on deck. He laid down on the deck and reached down to the window by which he had entered and pulled up the ropes, then unfastened the ends from his waist and tied them to the stout hitching posts at either end.

"I'll try to pick the boat out of this mess," he called across to the shore. "You stand ready to haul."

But David was over-optimistic. Though he worked steadily for hours and broke his sapling and two of the sweeps in prying loose cakes of ice, he was unable to budge the craft until the rising water forced the end of the jam free. Then the Orleans boat floated slowly away while David thrust frantically at the ice and shouted to Thorne and Coffeen to pay out rope until he was free of the bar.

As soon as it reached open water below the jam the boat swung toward the shore, and the ice and debris that still clung to it worked loose and drifted away. Thorne and Coffeen were straining at the ropes to draw the craft out of the edge of the current and into the comparatively quiet water near the shore and Starr presently came down the hill and gave them a hand. Slowly, inch by inch, the party on shore brought the boat in until David could reach up to the branches of the trees and help them pull in. Spare ropes were then tossed on board and David tied the boat securely to the trunks of the flooded trees on the lower slope of the hill.

So much for that. The Orleans boat floated just upstream from the spot where the two felled trees still showed some of their branches above the water. Twelve feet under it was the shelf that less than a day before had marked the bank of the river. There was still danger that ice and debris would sweep down upon the boat and sink it, but that was a chance that would have to be taken.

David sat down on the deck and panted with relief and exhaustion. His lungs ached and he found himself coughing a dry hacking cough. That reminded him of Old Tom, and the thought flashed through his mind that just one year ago that day, Christmas, he and his grandfather had marched through the howling mob of Philadelphians and then gone supperless to bed in their cell. Well, he was free now, thought David, free to roam the world as he pleased—and he was tired of it already.

He rose and crawled wearily along the branches of the trees to the hill and started to climb. Sleep was what he needed, now—sleep, and lots of it. Perhaps after that he would feel more like spitting in the eye of the world.

Starr was waiting at the brow of the hill but he did not notice that her eyes were filled with tears.

"Lexie is dead," she said.

"Dead?" queried David dully. What was death? He collapsed by the fire and was asleep on the instant. Starr spread several blankets and rolled him over and over in them. Thorne was already asleep and Coffeen sat with his back to a tree, nodding in slumber while the fat tears ran down his cheeks in sorrow for the little sister that he would never see again.

Chapter 42

DAVID SAT ON THE DECK OF HIS ORLEANS BOAT, WHICH Starr had christened the "Well Come," gazing idly at the snow-covered little frontier town of Louisville. Moored along the bank were the scores of flats and keels that had brought to the town the products of East and West and laid them at the feet of the blacksmiths, coopers, and other artificers whose shops were scattered on the low flood plain, apparently with little regard to any street plan.

Out of this maze of shops, and houses, and muddy wagon tracks came a lithe, solidly built young man in a green hunting shirt. A blanket roll was slung over his shoulder and a war bag hung at his side. He was armed with the rifle, hunting knife, and tomahawk affected alike by hunters, scouts, and rivermen. His long black hair hung below his coonskin cap and framed a round, merry face that was as brown as an Indian's.

At sight of the figure picking its way through the slush of the river bank David sprang to his feet.

"Mike Fink," he cried.

Mike paused uncertainly and looked around. David waved his arms.

"Mike Fink," he shouted. "You blasted son of a hairless ape."

Then Mike saw him. "Why, Dave Braddee," he cried, "you bastard spawn of an alligator's sister. What are you doin' here?"

"Boatin'," answered David. "Come on board."

He reached down and took Mike's rifle, then gave the scout a hand and hauled him to the deck. The two young men eyed each other appraisingly. Both of them were filled out more than they had been three years before and both of them looked not only more mature but more hard-souled.

"Well, you obfuscated old highbinder," said David, slapping Mike on the arm. "What have you been doing with yourself?"

"Scoutin', you old river horse," said Mike. "Jest scoutin' Injuns. What you been doin'? The last I heerd o' you they'd taken you to Philadelphia. What was the matter? Did you fergit how to run?"

David sobered suddenly. "Somebody had to be the goat," he said noncommittally.

"Well, what are you doin' here?" persisted Mike. "I thought you was studyin' to be a preacher, or somethin'."

"A lawyer," David corrected him. "When I got back from Philadelphia I thought I'd follow the river for a while again."

"Nice tub you got here," observed Mike judicially as he loosed a brown stream of tobacco juice on the deck. "Who you workin' fer?"

"Myself," said David.

"No!" ejaculated Mike incredulously. "What goddam fool would give you a boat and cargo?"

"Nobody gave it to me," answered David. "I picked it off an ice bar when the boat I was piloting was sunk by the ice."

"Who was you pilotin'?"

"Captain Gurdon Thorne. Remember him?"

"Sure. Long-faced galoot. Looked like he mighta been drinkin' swill."

"Right. We got out all we could move of his cargo and

then when I saved this tub he wanted to make out it was his boat in place of the one that had been wrecked."

"Yeah? What did you do?"

"What do you think? I told him to go plumb to hell. From then on I was captain *and* owner. I shipped what was left of his plunder in exchange for his labor at the sweeps—and that of his wife and his nigger. We had to live on the deck until we got to Limestone, where we could sell off some of the flour."

Mike whistled. "Not much of a crew for an overloaded lumber scow like this," he said.

"Well, it isn't every flour boat that's got a pilot like me," stated David. "I did pick up a couple of immigrants at Limestone but they left me here."

"Where are you going now?"

"Natchez is where I agreed to take the Thornes. I may go on to Orleans with the flour."

"D'ye need a hand?" said Mike suddenly.

"Sure. Do you want to go along? I'll give you fifty dollars for the voyage—after I sell the flour."

"Done," said Mike. "When do we start?"

"Soon as the Thornes get back. Starr—Mrs. Thorne wanted to buy something in town. I'll lay you a dollar of that fifty that the captain has to be carried back to the boat."

"Done," said Mike, who dearly loved a wager and was not choosy as to which side he supported. He chewed his tobacco industriously and from time to time contributed freely to the brown current of the Ohio.

"Give me a bite off your twist," said David. He wrenched off a fragment of tobacco and chewed with relish. Now that he thought of it he and Mike had taken their first chaws of tobacco together, so many years ago that he had forgotten when it was. It was just like old times, somehow. He and Mike had always understood one another in spite of their

differences of temperament. The only serious scrap they had ever had was on that day nearly three years before when the soldiers had arrested Mike and taken him down river.

"There's something I got to tell you, Mike," said David. "Maybe you won't want to go along when you hear. Did you know about the Injuns taking the 'Elzie'?"

"Yeah, 'pears like I did hear somethin' about it," answered Mike vaguely.

"Well, there were eight men killed there, including Dad and Lank."

"Yeah?" Mike was sympathetic but still vague.

"I was on watch," blurted David. "I was dreaming."

Mike chewed methodically for a moment, then voided a stream that left a brown stain two feet long on the side of the next flatboat. He coughed in an embarrassed fashion.

"To tell the truth, Dave," he said, "I did hear about it. That's one reason I'm here. Hell! I knowed you wouldn't a-done it on purpose."

Both of them lapsed into silence. "Guess what I heerd in town," said Mike suddenly. "Arcola de-something-or-other, you know, the sloe-eyed gal, was here for two years. She left last fall with a Spanish gent fer Orleens." He slapped his knee and poked David in the ribs. "'Member the first time you went to see her, Dave?"

"Do you remember the last time I went?" shot back David.

"God! Them was the days," said Mike, with the air of a seasoned man of the world looking back at the naïve pranks of boyhood.

"Here comes Mrs. Thorne," said David. "The captain isn't with her. That nigger is Coffeen. Likely boy. His sister died in childbirth on the way down. I had to officiate at the delivery."

"That so?" returned Mike with interest.

David and Mike rose to their feet as Starr came up the gangplank.

"This is Mike Fink," said David. "He's going to make a hand with us."

Starr curtsied to Mike as if he was a gentleman. "We need another hand badly," she said, then turned to David. "Captain Thorne is at the Cross Keys," she said. "He will be along later."

She disappeared through the trap and David nudged Mike.

"You lose your dollar."

A raw-boned Kentuckian with brown stains at the corners of his mouth strolled up with a lanky boy at his heels.

"Howdy, Captain Braddee," said the man. "I'm back from takin' the Brownlows over the falls and I'm ready fer you."

"Mr. Thorne's not back yet," said David.

The pilot looked up at the sun. "Reckon he'd better git hyar purty quick," he said. "Hit'll be dark in a couple of hours and I'm engaged fer all day tomorrer."

"I'll have him here in fifteen minutes," said David. "Wait for me."

David and Mike walked rapidly to the Cross Keys and barged into the taproom. As David had expected, Thorne was roaring drunk and objected to being forced to leave the bosom friends that he had made during the last hour. Not only that, but the bosom friends objected to having a free-spender taken from them, and Monsieur Albret, who recognized David as the troublesome young man who had frequented the Cross Keys during the last summer, ordered him out. David wasted no words, but hauled Thorne to his feet and was walking him out of the door when the pack closed in on him and Mike.

Nothing could have pleased the two friends better. In less than five minutes the taproom of the inn had been reduced

to ruin. The chairs and tables were splintered, the bottles and mirrors behind the bar had been reduced to fragments, and all the customers who had not decamped were lying hors de combat in ungraceful but significant attitudes. Monsieur Albret, with one hand holding a broken jaw, had fled out the back door gurgling for help. David hoisted the half-conscious Thorne across his shoulders and ran to the boat while Mike scouted behind in case the innkeeper had found the constable.

The boat was quickly pushed off and all hands manned the sweeps to take it up the river and out to the place where it would be caught by the thread of the current. Behind them a knot of men gathered on the shore and shouted and gesticulated. The pilot grinned.

"Reckon they'll be waitin' fer you below the falls," he said.

Mike looked down at his rifle. "Catchin' comes afore hangin' in this country," he said, and departed to place the weapon below deck.

"Hard on the nigh sweep," said the pilot. "Hold up on the off."

David and the pilot's boy pulled on their sweep and the boat rounded into the current and began to move more quickly. The men on shore were forgotten now and the roar of the rapids could be heard distinctly from the rocks where they lay in wait. The pilot looked at Starr and spat over the side.

"No need to be afeerd, ma'am," he said. "Jest set down for'ard thar by yore husband and look at the scenery and keep him from rollin' overboard." He spat over the side again, then continued. "Thar's three chutes ter these hyar falls, ma'am: the Kentucky Chute next ter the Kentucky shore ain't hardly ever passable, 'cept in mighty high water, and it takes mejum high water ter make the Middle Chute

passable—higher even than it is today. The Injun Chute's the one fer us. Hit's the most torturous, but the water's deepest thar. Hit'll be like pie today."

Momentarily the roar of the rapids became louder and the flow of the current swifter. The boat was running close to the Indiana shore now, and on the left, even closer at hand, appeared the tops of a series of rocks that in very low water formed parts of an island. The pilot signalled for his son to join him at the steering sweep.

"He knows jest every move to make," the Kentuckian shouted above the rapids. "You-all stand ready to dig in when I holler at you."

To David the passage of the falls was nothing new, but to Starr and Mike and Coffeen it was exciting and dangerous; Thorne was too dead to the world to know what was going on. As the flatboat struck the first rapid it seemed to Starr to slant forward perceptibly and to rush to irretrievable ruin on the rocks. Everyone on board was quickly drenched by the spray that billowed up in white clouds from the rocks. David was pulling on the right oar and Mike and Coffeen at the left in order to give the craft headway and enable the steering sweep to swerve the boat. The pilot yelled to David and he threw his chest against his sweep. Mike sprang to his aid and the two strained to hold the blade in the water. The boat swung away from the rocks and headed for the Indian bank.

A moment later the channel turned to the left and the maneuver had to be repeated on the left while David frantically plied his sweep to help turn the boat and keep it off the bank. On either side of the boat the river dashed against the rocks with a thunder that deafened the voyagers and that sent the exhilarated blood racing through their veins. At the stern the Kentuckian stood with feet wide apart and

methodically moving jaws, unmoved by the turmoil and danger.

The boat was heading for the island now and once more Mike sprang to David's aid. The current leaped and tore at their sweep, striving to tear it from their grasp, and Mike shouted at the waves from the sheer joy of combat. Suddenly there was a splintering crack, the pressure of the water was released from the sweep, and David and Mike were thrown forward on the deck. The boat wobbled suddenly and was in danger of being turned broadside to the stream.

When David regained his feet the pilot and his boy had transferred their sweep to the right lock and were calmly watching the banks. The water was smoother now and opened before them, for a quarter of a mile.

"Lucky that sweep didn't snap before," shouted the pilot. "The worst is over."

Indeed the worst was past and the flatboat ran swiftly down the channel while the pilot watched the water narrowly and guided the craft with the side sweeps. Toward the Kentucky shore the voyagers could see the water boiling among the rocks. A flatboat appeared in the Middle Chute, tossing about like a chip, then suddenly emerged into the main channel. The pilot shook his head.

"That's Jim Yates fer you," he shouted. "The crazy galoot's always takin' chances. Ought ter be a law agin it."

The Orleans boat turned to the left and a cluster of cabins appeared on the southern shore.

"Reckon this is whar I leave ye, Captain Braddee," said the pilot. "The charge is two dollars fer me and fifty cents fer the lad."

David looked at the shore and saw several horsemen dismount and run toward a skiff. Mike had brought his and David's rifles from the cabin and was examining the primings.

"I reckon you and the boy will have to swim for it, pilot," said David. "I don't think we'll be able to put ashore."

The pilot shifted his quid and spat deliberately. "In that case, captain," he said, "hit'll cost ye jest double."

David dropped five dollars into the pilot's calloused palm. Mike handed "Old Katy" to David and went to take the boy's place at the sweep. He held his rifle in one hand and his sweep in the other while he watched the oncoming skiff with a pleased grin.

"Steady, there, Mike," said David. "Don't shoot unless you have to."

The skiff was now riding a few rods ahead of the Orleans boat. A man in the bow flourished a pistol. "Halt in the name of the law," he shouted.

David guffawed. "You stop the river, mister," he cried, "and I'll halt."

The officer of the law failed to see the humor. "Put into shore," he ordered, "or I'll shoot."

Starr stood up and took Mike's oar, and the scout favored her with a glance of approval. Both David and Mike had their rifles raised, ready for action.

"Disarm those men, Mr. Patton," shouted the constable to the pilot. Mr. Patton grinned appreciatively and spat over the side.

"I'd luv ter obleege ye, constabule," he opined, "but they got the bead on me."

David spoke up impatiently. "One crack out of that bean shooter," he warned the constable, "and we'll send you to Abraham's buzzom."

The constable consulted hastily with his fellows and seemed undecided as to whether the boatmen were bluffing. David turned to the pilot.

"I reckon you'd better jump before the shooting starts, Mr. Pilot," he said. "You can reach the skiff easy."

The pilot and his boy sprang far out into the river and a few strokes took them to the side of the skiff as the broad-horn swept on by. Evidently the constable's party was glad to occupy itself in helping the swimmers aboard and thus afford an excuse to allow the flatboat to drift out of range.

Mike laid down his rifle and took the sweep from Starr. "That was mighty spunky of you, ma'am," he said.

"What else could I do?" she answered. "My husband was the one that got you into trouble."

Mike looked at the water-soaked figure of Gurdon Thorne snoring blissfully at the bow and felt a blundering desire to be comforting.

"They do say that marriages is made in heaven," he said, "but I reckon you musta had to make yours in a taproom."

And then he wondered why the girl looked at him with a startled flush and disappeared into the cabin.

Chapter 43

THE HILLS, WHICH ABOVE THE FALLS HAD CAST THEIR DARK shadows upon the green water, now marched in the distance, and the river swept lazily back and forth across the flood plain as if glad to be released from their frowning guardianship. In the savannas where the floods had washed away the banks the soil showed black and rich and deep, and the cane rustled thick and dry in brakes that grew twenty feet high in summer. There were catalpas, straight and sturdy, sycamores rising white and clean, and cottonwoods bending gracefully over the glades, waiting for the green garments of spring and for the river nymphs who danced beneath their boughs. Grapevines as much as a foot in thickness clung lovingly to the forest oaks or leaped from tree to tree at giddy heights.

Here also was game in abundance and David and Mike found no difficulty in keeping the larder stocked with deer and buffalo meat by going on short hunts before breakfast. The days were mild and sunny and the water just high enough to remove the fear of sand bars across the channel of the river. The daylight hours were short, however, and on no day was the boat able to make more than forty miles.

Through some oversight they had left Louisville without any whiskey aboard and four days without liquor had left Thorne white and shaky. He must get some liquor before he broke down, he told himself as he lay on the flour barrels in the hold and gazed out the stern window. The lavender-bearded sea serpent with a yellow ruff sprinkled with pink polka dots that hovered in the wake of the boat was a

figment of his imagination, he knew, and though he fought down his desire to mention it casually to the other members of the party, he could not avoid watching hour after hour with a kind of fascinated horror on his face. That was why he spent so much of his time in the hold, away from the others. Sir Walter, he had dubbed the creature, out of some half forgotten well of Elizabethan lore.

The sea serpent reared its huge triangular head from the water and lunged toward the window. Thorne muffled a scream and scrambled over the barrels to the living quarters. The thing was just behind him, slithering its fantastic bulk over the barrels. Starr was sitting on her bunk sewing on Mike's hunting shirt and Thorne threw her a word of warning as he ran up the ladder to the deck and slammed the trap door shut. It could have Starr for all of him, he thought viciously, and he listened for her screams, forgetting for the moment that the creature was a figment.

When he remembered he lifted the trap sheepishly and cast a look astern. The sea serpent was undulating lazily through the water as it always had, and Coffeen was dragging a fishing line under its very nose. He had been unjust to accuse the benign Sir Walter of such savagery. The big fellow was indeed nothing more than a good luck charm, a sort of mascot.

Thorne took a cigar from the pocket of his stained waistcoat and rolled it between his palms to restore the shape it had lost in his hasty flight from the hold. He closed his teeth over it and turned toward David and Mike, who had been watching him in astonishment. He tried to pass off his strange actions with a show of irritation.

"We've been gone from Pittsburgh eight weeks," he said, "and we're not even out of the Ohio. How am I going to get to Natchez in time to locate a plantation and put in a crop?"

"Well, what do you expect, traveling in the winter?" demanded David.

"With a riverman of your *reputation*," said Thorne, "I expected obstacles to be cleared away like magic."

David looked sharply at his passenger. "Brace off from my reputation," he said. "Anyhow, them that live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones."

Thorne was sober enough to sheer away from a dangerous topic, but he stubbornly pursued the main subject.

"Well, you admit you are a good riverman, anyhow. Why don't we make better time?"

"Because I can't go any faster than the current," retorted David.

"We could travel at night," offered Thorne.

"All right, we'll travel tonight and see how you like it," said David.

Starr, who had come on deck at the beginning of the conversation, had been listening quietly, but now she broke in. "If Mr. Braddee thinks we should tie up for the night," she said to her husband, "it would be better for us to agree. He knows the river better than we do."

"That's just why I agreed to drift tonight," said David cuttingly. "There is only one big bend in the next forty miles and the water is high enough to clear the bars. We'll be safe enough—from the river, at least."

Night dropped its chill over the river and everyone but David went below. The boat was drifting straight on its course and David pulled in the steering sweep and sat down with his back to the lock. There was little that he could do until the moon came up, for the night was as black as Egypt and only the starlight made it possible to distinguish between river and shore. Far away on the Kentucky side a wolf howled dismally and another howl seemed to answer it from the north.

David thought of that fall night not five months back when he had dreamed of Starr while the Indians crept upon the "Elzie." Well, he no longer dreamed of Starr, and he never ceased to wonder that he had ever dreamed of her. The finery that had once given her a touch of pathetic glamor in his eyes had been lost in the ice and she was dressed in lumpy woolen clothes more suited to the menial tasks that fell to her lot. She was nothing more, now, than a tavern maid of all work, performing her duties in silence and expecting no word of recognition from the guests. She did not even seem feminine as, with hanks of pale hair straggling over her great hollow eyes, she toiled silently at the sweeps beside her scarecrow husband.

David had not even the grace to yield her the homage her courage deserved. To him she was simply a girl with whom he had once been in love and from whom an otherwise unjust fortune had seen fit to release him. And yet he could get no sense of release. Instead, a tide of resentment rose against her, as if she had been the author of all his troubles. At first he had found himself carrying on imaginary conversations with her in which he had poured out on her all the pent-up bile of the last year; then he had taken to speaking to her sharply when he gave his orders and singling her out for bitter recriminations when she failed to understand. At first he had kept his eye on Thorne, lest the husband resent these aspersions on his wife, for nothing would have pleased David better than an excuse to pop Thorne into the river. When the man failed to take his wife's part, however, and even added some digs of his own, David came to resent him as much as he did Starr.

But he did not mend his ways; if anything he became more brutal and at times he even added obscenity to the abuses that he was continually hurling at her. He was showing both the Thornes, he told himself, that he was better

than they were. He was making them eat crow, as he had promised himself that he would, and yet, hug the assurance as he might, it gave him no comfort. Indeed, he did not dare to look within himself, for fear of what he would see, and even as he fought against the impulse there came the voice of Brackenridge out of the past: "I wonder, David," it said, "will you stand the test when it comes."

David was conscious of long shadows on the river. The moon must be rising behind him. He was about to turn to look at it when he was arrested by an almost imperceptible atmospheric throb. He sat with head half turned, every sense quickened. A puff of wind came from downstream and the throb assumed a definite pattern. One—two—three! One—two—three! One—two—three! One! One—two—three! One—two—three! One—two—three! One! The tempo hastened imperceptibly with each round until finally it became a furious, almost continuous sound. Suddenly there was a pause that seemed to last for long moments, then the throbbing began over again, slowly and ominously mounting to the same furious crescendo.

From some recess of David's mind a vision floated up. He seemed to be very small and to be standing in a pannier supporting himself by holding to the top. Across the horse's back from him he saw the black poll of another lad, while ahead of him, holding the bridle of the horse, stood a silent buckskinned figure with an eagle feather dangling from its scalp lock. Behind him on another horse was a woman, dark-haired and intent, listening with half averted face to the distant throb of drums.

Indian drums! The certainty struck him like a blow across those years of time. Silently he padded across the deck to the trap door and hissed to the sleepers below. Mike was awake on the instant and was soon crouching beside David.

"It's Injuns, all right," assented the scout. "Many's the

night I've laid in the hills and listened to the drums in their towns."

"What are they celebrating?" asked David.

"Oh, nothin' much. They've had good hunting and their bellies are full and they're prancin' around now gettin' ready ter give their squaws an all-fired good friggin'. Injuns are funny that way. They can't always get started without the aid of a drum or two."

"What should we do?" asked David.

Mike glanced at him sharply. "Yo're the captain," he said.

"Well," said David, "there's no use trying to hide with this big scow. I'm for pulling the sweeps in through the windows and drifting by the camp without showing a soul on deck. They may think there's enough of us to lick the whole nation."

"Sounds good ter me," approved Mike. "Ten to one, they've had the fight knocked out of 'em by the Legion and won't be hankerin' fer furdur punishment."

It was the work of only a few minutes for the voyagers to complete their preparations. The sweeps were drawn into the cabin, where they could be worked through the windows if necessary. The space by the windows and loopholes was cleared and the four rifles, the double-barreled fowling piece, and the two braces of pistols which constituted the boat's arsenal were loaded and laid out in the center of the cabin. Starr stationed herself in the moonlit area beneath the open trapdoor with powder horn, bullets, and patches, ready to reload the weapons as they were fired.

The beat of the drums was loud and distinct now. On the deck David and Mike tugged at the spare sweep as the boat rounded a gentle bend in the river and came in sight of the Indian encampment. The sweep grated softly in the lock as it was drawn in and laid on the deck, then the patch of moonlight in which Starr sat was blotted out as the two

men dropped through the trapdoor into the cabin. Starr stood up and looked out the window toward the Indian shore. The blood curdling howls of the score of dark figures stamping about a roaring big fire fascinated her. The blade of the sweep thrust through the window seemed to cut the scene in two and she found herself thinking that except for that she might have thought herself looking at a painting such as those she had seen in the homes of the gentlemen around Lancaster.

Suddenly a voice rose above the yips of the dancers and the Indians broke from the circle and ran to the river bank.

"There they come," said David. "Remember, not a sound. Our only chance is to bluff them."

He looked around the gloomy cabin and saw Starr standing before the window.

"Mrs. Thorne," he said sharply, "you are in the line of fire between the two windows. Sit down."

Starr sat down numbly. It was hard for her to realize that they were in deadly peril. Indeed nothing had seemed real to her since the day they had left Pittsburgh, and a hundred times she had thought that she would surely wake up and find herself back in the house on Front Street, or perhaps even in her trundle bed in the kitchen of her aunt's tavern.

"They're taking to their canoes," said Thorne. "Shouldn't we try to sink them?"

"Not if you want to keep yore ha'r," answered Mike grimly. "It'll be time enough to make every shot count if they try to come aboard."

"Oh, well," rejoined Thorne casually, "Sir Walter will get them anyhow."

"Who?"

Thorne came back to the world of reality. "Nothing," he said. "I was just thinking aloud."

Starr rose with a hunting knife in her hand and walked to

the firebox. She groped for a moment in the darkness beyond and found the bundle of trade hatchets which was part of Thorne's outfit. A swift stroke of her knife cut the lashing and she counted out five hatchets in the darkness. With these she quietly stepped across the cabin and laid one by the knee of each of the watchful men, touching him to let him know the weapon was there, then returned to her stance with the remaining hatchet.

The yells of the savages drew closer and Starr could hear the incautious splash of their paddles in the water. The uncanny silence aboard the "Well Come" was evidently having its effect, for the canoes remained at a respectful distance and even the Indians' yips seemed to exhibit a note of uncertainty such as a feist might show before a skunk hole.

David made his way cautiously over the flour barrels to the stern window.

"The canoes are havin' a powwow," he whispered. "They don't know whether to come on or not."

"How about giving them a volley to discourage them?" suggested Thorne.

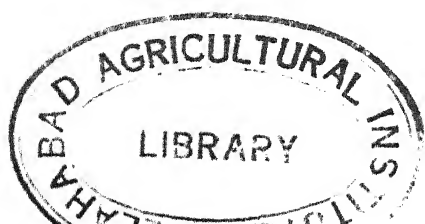
"And let them know how few we are!" interjected Mike.

Thorne relapsed into silence, though he wanted very much to ask if Sir Walter was still following the boat. There was a chorus of excited yips from the Indians.

"Maybe they're coming at us now," said David. "They're strung out across the river. One canoe is between me and the fire—a perfect target. No, they're not coming. They're trailing us just out of range—they think."

"Injuns never will learn that a rifle shoots further than a trade musket," observed Mike. "Maybe they're waitin' till we're out o' sight o' the fire."

But if the Indians had planned on making an attack they soon lost heart, for a couple of miles downstream they bunched again for a few moments, then turned back after



giving vent to a few disappointed whoops. David and Mike were jubilant. A good bluff, they opined, always worked on redskins. But Thorne, as he listened to them, told himself that he knew better. The fact of the matter was that the Indians had been afraid to pass Sir Walter to get at them.

* * * * *

Gurdon Thorne sat in the little ordinary at Red Bank moodily fingering his whiskey noggin. Two drinks, or perhaps three, were all that he could allow himself if he expected to keep a clear head for the business in hand. He fought down the raging thirst that consumed him and rolled each sip of whiskey in his mouth, reluctant to let it trickle down his throat. Anyhow it was a relief to get away from Sir Walter, he reflected. The damn' thing had watched him leave the boat that afternoon and had even flapped its ruff in sardonic *au revoir*.

Red Bank wasn't much of a village—merely half a dozen cabins so new that it was a marvel they could look so disreputable. The people, too, looked as bad as their cabins, and even if he had not had categorical proof Thorne would have been ready to believe popular rumor that they engaged in river piracy. Thorne raised a finger to attract the attention of the shock-headed landlord, and the fellow slouched over to the table.

"I'm looking for George Buckburrow," he said. "Can you tell me where to find him?"

"Maybe I kin—I ain't sayin'," replied the man suspiciously. "What d'ye want of him?"

"That's none of your business," said Thorne testily.

The tavernkeeper looked at Thorne with more than a trace of the frontiersman's contempt for nobles.

"Who sent ye?" he said.

"Monsieur Albret of Louisville."

"Well, I reckon that's different," drawled the man. "I'm George Buckburrow, stranger. Who are you?"

"Gurdon Thorne, at your service." Thorne drew a slip of paper from his waistcoat and passed it to the landlord. The latter studied the paper for a moment, then sat down next to Thorne.

"Mounsheer says you have a problem I mought help you with. Let's have it."

Thorne took a cigar from his pocket and bit the end off. He noted with satisfaction that one of Buckburrow's ears was cropped. There was no doubt about the man's villainy.

"Get me a light, will you?" he commanded. The man hesitated and seemed about to refuse, then thought better of it. He brought a lighted shaving from the fireplace and held it to the end of Thorne's cigar. Thorne drew a second cigar from his pocket and passed it to Buckburrow.

"The problem is simple," said Thorne as mine host lighted his cigar. "The patroon that I hired to take my boat to Natchez has brought a friend of his aboard and, in effect, appropriated boat and cargo."

Buckburrow puffed inscrutably at his cigar. "Why didn't ye have him put in the calaboose in Lo'ville?" he said.

Thorne bridled a little and mine host observed to himself that the nob was not a very good liar.

"Well," answered Thorne, "it isn't as simple as that. The patroon thinks the boat is his because he saved it from the ice." He found it unnecessary to go further into the details and the tavernkeeper exhibited no curiosity.

"What do you want me to do?" said Buckburrow.

Thorne shook the ash from his cigar to the sanded floor. "If some way could be found," he said slowly, "of getting those two men off the boat—not too gently, perhaps—I'd

pay handsomely, say a hundred dollars apiece. And then I'd need two or three hands that knew the river."

The landlord hitched his chair a little closer to his guest and his voice took on an ingratiating inflection as he leaned close to Gurdon Thorne's ear . . .

Chapter 44

DAVID LOOKED UP AT THE HEIGHTS OF BATTERY ROCK ON the Indian shore and then lowered his face to discharge a brown stream between his dangling feet into the river.

"I don't care how much you know about women, Mike Fink," he said in a low voice. "You got her dead wrong. She's no more a lady than you are. She's just a lyin' little bitch that was raised a tavern wench."

"Well, there's no call ter jump down my neck," retorted Mike. "I only said she had a powerful lot o' spunk fer a gal that had been raised a fine lady."

"And I'm telling you she's no lady," returned David doggedly.

"Then how come she married Thorne? You don't say he warn't no gentleman, whatever he is now?"

"How should I know why he married her? Anyhow he got clipped good and plenty."

"What makes ye say thet? An' don't talk so loud. She'll hear you."

"Well, you got eyes. You can see for yourself she's a puny little brat with no more gumption than a peeled turnip."

"Mancee, that's whar yo're wrong. She's a right tidy little piece, I'd say—'cept fer her eyes. She's seen trouble, thet gal."

"No more trouble than she's given," retorted David viciously.

"You ain't got no call," remonstrated Mike, "to git in

such a swither. A body'd think you'd been tryin' to tumble her and hadn't had no luck."

"Balls!" snapped David. "Why, I wouldn't look at her with a glass eye."

"'Pears to me," observed Mike, "thet yo're makin' a powerful fuss over nothin'."

"Who said it was nothin'?" demanded David sullenly.

"Now see here, Dave Braddee," returned Mike with heat, "thar's no sense you actin' like a ba'r with two cubs and a sore tail. If yo're lookin' fer a fight you come to the right county, and if you ain't lookin' fer a fight, don't be so ab-damn-it-ter-hell-strapalous."

David caught a glimpse of Starr's pale hair disappearing into the hold. Spying on him, eh! He turned his smouldering eyes on Mike. "Aw, teach your grandmother to milk ducks," he said contemptuously.

Mike sprang to his feet. "Do you want ter fight or don't ye?"

"Fight a skunk and smell like one," grinned David tauntingly.

"Now ye've gotta fight, you red-headed bastard," said Mike hopping with anger. "Git up an' put out yer dukes. I been owin' you a thrashin' fer a long time."

David rose with alacrity. The seething rage that possessed him could only be assuaged by combat, and even that proved too short. As Mike tried to grapple, David dealt him a heavy blow on the side of the neck and toppled him into the river. Mike struggled and coughed, then struck out for the boat. David picked up the boat hook and shook it menacingly.

"You try to come back aboard and I'll explatterate your brains like cow shyd," he shouted.

"All right, you friggin' puke of a Shawnee man-whore, I'll git even with you some day."

"Not until your gun's dry, anyhow," David retorted. He

turned to Coffeen, who had come on deck at the sounds of conflict, and ordered him to bring up Mike's blanket and war bag. Meanwhile he swiftly lashed Mike's rifle to a sweep and threw it overboard. A wooden tub was standing on the deck and David threw in it Mike's powder horn and his belt with its knife, tomahawk, and bullet pouch. Starr was standing before him with Mike's blanket and war bag.

"Don't do it, David," she said.

"You mind your own business," said David angrily.

"Don't do it, if for no other reason than because we need him to work the boat."

"Always looking for the main chance," sneered David. Starr turned away and he snatched the blanket and war bag from her and threw them into the tub. Mike was silent now and ghostly white as he supported himself on the sweep and trod water. David remembered with a pang that the scout had never been a very good swimmer, but he steeled himself against mercy and picked up the tub and dropped it into the water.

"Here's all your plunder," he called. "Take it, and I hope hell freezes over a foot thick before I see you again."

Mike raised himself up and shook his fist in David's direction. "Yah," he jeered, "you better hope it does. I'll git you, Dave Braddee, if it's the last thing I ever do."

David grinned sardonically at the receding Mike. "If you ever do get me," he shouted, "it'll *be* the last thing you do. Take keer yoreself, Mike."

"You take keer yoreself, you bloody bastard," Mike shouted. "Don't let nothin' happen ter you till I kin git at you."

David turned around. Starr and Coffeen and Thorne were standing by the trapdoor watching him. Coffeen's mobile brown countenance showed both interest and horror; Starr's face was a study in compassion, whether for himself or

Mike, David could not tell. Thorne's face, however, made his blood run cold. The man looked like Mephisto must have looked when Faust sold his soul, and David had a feeling that the outcome of the quarrel could have suited Thorne no better if he had planned it himself.

David jerked a thumb at the river. "He'll be all right," he said, half apologetically, then brought himself up short. This was no way to handle the situation.

"Man the sweeps," he burst forth harshly. "Can't you gory fools see we're comin' to a bend!"

The "Well Come" swept around the bend and floated into a broad clear channel. Presently on the Indian shore appeared a limestone bluff, a hundred feet high, topped by a small forest of cedars. Thorne, who was watching the bluff intently, suddenly pointed between the trees to an arched opening in the rock.

"There's a cave in the bluff," he exclaimed.

"Sure," said David, "I've been in it."

"That must be the place I heard of in Red Bank," said Thorne. "They called it Cave Inn Rock."

"Don't know anything about an inn there," said David. "The last time I was there we spent a week in it waiting for the ice to clear out of the river."

The trees now hid the opening but as the "Well Come" drifted close in to the shore the voyagers saw a wide board nailed to a tree. On it was painted in rude letters the legend "Cave Inn Rock. Entertainment for Man and Beast."

"That's it, all right," said Thorne. "It's not too long till dark. Let's stop here for the night."

"All right," assented David. "The stretch below here isn't so safe in the dusk anyhow."

"Maybe we can get a pilot tomorrow," suggested Thorne.

David steered the "Well Come" to the shore a few hundred yards below the cave and tied it to a tree. A lanky man

with a stubby beard strolled in from the direction of the cave.

"Howdy, strangers," he said. "I'm Harry Magregor, landlord o' the inn."

Thorne waved a hand in greeting. The thumb of his left hand was stuck negligently in the belt in which he wore a brace of pistols. "I am Captain Thorne," he said. "These are my wife, my servant, and Dave Braddee, the young man who works my boat."

"Just to keep the record straight," interjected David, "it's my boat."

"Well, that's between you two," said Magregor easily. "Why not come up to the inn for supper?"

"How much will it be?" demanded David.

Magregor looked David over with a grin that struck the boatman as distinctly unpleasant. "I'll tell you what I'll do," he said. "I'm just gettin' a start here and to build up a reputation I'll give you your suppers for the liquor you buy."

"Nothing could be fairer than that," said Thorne promptly.

David eyed the landlord with open hostility. "How much is the liquor?" he demanded.

"A dollar a quart," said Magregor. "The best Monongahela."

"Hell! You don't want much," observed David.

"We're a long ways from the Monongahela, young man," returned Magregor equably.

"Well, I've got a keg of my own here I got in Red Bank," said David. "I'm not coming."

The landlord glanced at Starr, then back at David. He lowered his voice. "We have—other advantages," he hinted.

"That's what I thought," said David. "I'm not coming."

"Well, I am," said Thorne. "Coming, Starr?"

"No, Ill stay here."

Thorne shrugged. "Do as you please," he said. "Coffeen, you come with me."

David built a fire on the bank and he and Starr broiled venison collops while their corn dodger baked. There was little conversation, for the shadow of what David had done to Mike lay between them. David was not haunted by any fear that Mike was unable to take care of himself, for the scout would have been able to cross North America with no more equipment than had been left him; it was simply David's own knowledge that he had deliberately picked a quarrel with the man who had proved himself a friend by throwing in with him when everyone else had been against him. David stirred uneasily as he thought of the hell to pay if Mike had decided to follow him, and he wondered vaguely if he would have set Mike adrift so brashly, if he had intended to stop at Big Cave. Perhaps Mike was at the inn now, taking on a little nose paint before he went on the warpath.

Starr uneasily watched the shadows behind David while she ate her dodger and venison. Mike Fink was not the man to be set adrift without a fight and she dreaded the moment when he should appear. But that would be an open menace, to be faced openly. What she dreaded even more were the sinister threats she had seen in the eyes of Magregor and Gurdon Thorne, almost as clearly as if they had had an understanding between them. If there had been nothing sinister intended, why had Gurdon taken Coffeen away, apparently for no reason save to get him out of the way?

Men's voices drifted down on the breeze and presently Starr heard them crashing through the brush along the path from the cave. She saw David rise to a crouching position as if making ready to fight or run. Then three dark figures loomed in the shadows. One of them passed around the fire. He was a tall, bold mannered, personable-looking

young fellow who probably valued himself as a ladies' man. He removed his hat and bowed like a tidewater squire.

"Mrs. Brady," he said, "I am Steve Pentecost. We have obtained your husband's permission to beg you—"

He went no further. With the tail of her eye Starr had seen an arm raised behind David, but before she could cry a warning, there came the dull sound of a blow and the boatman slumped to the ground.

"All right, boys," said George Buckburrow, "he's out. Give me a lift with him, Pat. You take keer o' the gal, Steve."

But Starr had already leaped to her feet and dashed for the woods. Steve started after her but was recalled by George.

"Let her go," said the innkeeper disgustedly. "She'll come back of her own accord, the fust wolf she hyars howlin'."

In the woods above, Starr paused to listen for sounds of pursuit. All was quiet save for the distant crashing and cursing of the men as they made their way over the rough shore line toward the cave. She turned and went back as quietly as she could to the edge of the clearing. David was gone and the fire had been scattered about the bank by the invaders. For a moment Starr stood listening lest one of the men had remained to seize her upon her return, then ran swiftly down the bank and aboard the "Well Come." A few minutes later she appeared with the double-barreled fowling piece in her hand and a brace of pistols thrust into a belt which she had buckled around her waist. Gurdon Thorne, she knew now, had been behind this treachery.

Starr approached the mouth of the cave with all the caution possible for a woman who had never lived in the woods. The fire within the cave outlined the mouth in a half circle of light against the darkness of the cliff and cast a glow upon the sombre trees that in summer hid the cave from travelers on the river. The rock floor of the cave extended

like a parapet beneath the arch and rose about three feet above the loam of the bank. A fissure in the center of the parapet gave such easy access to the floor of the cave that it might have been cut there by primitive dwellers for their convenience.

Starr crouched at one side of the cave and looked in. The roof kept its arch the entire length of the cave and the stone floor sloped gently upward to the point where bark partitions had been erected across the back of the cave to provide a number of apartments. In the large space at the front of the cave was the taproom and kitchen of the inn, and a fire in the center sent its smoke up in a strong, steady current to a sink hole in the roof. Around this fire were gathered three men and two women, in addition to Gurdon and Coffeen. The inert body of David, with hands tied together, lay at one side. Apparently he was still unconscious.

Well, that only meant that she would have to depend altogether on Coffeen. The voices of the men and women chattered on. They were chaffing Thorne about his skittish wife and it seemed to Starr that if he had not been so well liquored he would have realized that the ridicule was directed at him rather than at her. Instead, he acted as if he was the leader of the cut-throats, and for a while it was their humor to pay him every mark of deference. Starr shuddered at the veiled menace in their voices as the men played with her husband like a circle of grinning cats with a mouse. Coffeen, who was sitting well back from the fire, betrayed by the tenseness of his position and the alert movements of his head that he was fully alive to the situation.

Starr felt as if she was in the midst of a bad dream. It was a desperate risk, this thing she was about to do, and she strove to calm her shaking nerves. If she didn't, she thought, she would be unable to hold her weapons steady and her shaking voice would betray her terror.

"Which of you bully lads are going to Natchez with me?" said Thorne presently.

"Well, now," answered Steve Pentecost, "we thought we all might go along. We been kind of hankerin' for a glimpse of the world."

"Splendid!" cried Thorne. "You will be welcome aboard the 'Well Come.'" He grinned fatuously and buried his nose in his whiskey mug.

Buckburrow laughed immoderately at the pun and slapped Thorne resoundingly on the back. Thorne spilled his whiskey and choked. He turned savagely on Buckburrow.

"Keep your hands to yourself," he snarled. Buckburrow's heavy countenance lowered. "Just who do you think you are?"

For the first time an inkling of his true situation penetrated Thorne's foggy brain. He gulped nervously and tried to steady himself. Apparently he decided to carry things with his old-time high-handedness.

"It's none of your damn' business who I am," he said evenly. "It's enough that I hired you to do a job and that you will get your money. I'm asking now who is going to Natchez on my boat?"

"Your boat!" exclaimed Buckburrow. "I thought it belonged to the young feller yonder. Ain't that right, boys?"

Thorne ignored the confirming chorus. "Braddee did lay claim to it," he said heavily, "but he had no real right." Weak, devilish weak, thought Thorne. The old-time fire and assurance was gone, and he realized in sudden panic that he could not recall them, now or any other time.

"I reckon you're barking up the wrong tree, mister," said Pentecost. "If you'd a-thought you had any claim to that boat you'd a-done something about it in Louisville. It's too

late now. We've taken it from the young fellow and it's ours."

Starr had laid her pistols quietly on the edge of the parapet and now she slowly thrust the barrel of her fowling piece over the top. She took a deep breath and tried to speak boldly.

"Put up your hands—all of you," she said.

There was a moment of shock and every eye turned toward the entrance, but fire blindness prevented them from seeing either woman or weapon.

"Put them up," said Starr sharply. She could have sobbed with relief as men and women slowly and reluctantly obeyed the order.

"It's just the woman," said Pentecost. "Like as not she hasn't even got a gun."

George Burkburrow cleared his throat nervously and half rose. "Now, Miz Thorne," he said ingratiatingly, "let's talk this sitooation over quiet-like. Thar's five o' we-uns hyar an' you only got one shot—"

"I have a double-barreled fowling piece and two pistols," said Starr, "and I'm not a bad shot—really."

"An' I got another shot waitin' hyar in Ol' Bang-all," put in a brassy voice from the opposite side of the entrance. Starr jerked her head around and saw Mike Fink crouching below the parapet and sighting along his rifle.

"Who's that?" said Burkburrow. He was standing now.

"Mike Fink, Injun scout, at yore service," announced Mike. "No, you don't, you skunk. Elevate them paws like the little lady told ye."

Burkburrow reached higher toward the ceiling and swung on Thorne. "So this was your game," he snarled. "I might've known it, you white-livered—"

A pistol shot crackled and Burkburrow looked down through a cloud of smoke at Thorne. There was a puzzled

expression on his face as he sank slowly to his knees. Then the face went blank, the hands dropped, and the man toppled over on his side.

"Pick up them weepsons, Coffeen," ordered Mike, "an' fetch them out hyar. An' circle round to the back o' them skunks, out o' the line o' fire." Coffeen sprang to the task with alacrity and within a minute laid a miscellany of rifles, tomahawks, and hunting knives before Mike.

"Now pour a bucket o' water over Dave thar," said Mike, "an' cut him loose."

At the shock of the water David struggled to a sitting posture and looked dazedly around.

"Come on, shake out of it, Dave," bellowed Mike. "Coffeen, you an' the captain git him up between you an' hike fer the boat. An' see there ain't no funny stuff along the way."

"Yas, *suhl!*" answered Coffeen. Thorne rose readily enough to assist and between them they helped David out of the cave and disappeared into the shadows.

"Well, boys an' gals," said Mike companionably, "take down yore hands an' rest yoreselves. It must git purty tiresome reachin' fer the ceilin' that-a-way." He seated himself on the parapet and disposed his rifle across his lap with seeming negligence. "You kin go any time yo're ready, Miz Thorne," said Mike. "Have everything ready to cast off when I git thar. Fire a shot when yo're ready."

Starr departed into the darkness and Mike once more gave the prisoners his undivided attention. Magregor was the first to break the silence.

"Ain't you the feller young Braddee flung inter the river this evenin'?" he demanded.

"Why, yes," answered Mike warily, "now that ye mintion it, I believe I am."

"Well, then," pursued Magregor, "why don't ye throw in

with us? Thar's three of us men hyar an' we could take the boat away from Thorne an' Braddee an' split the profits. An' we could have a hell of a lot o' fun with the gals on the way, too."

Mike rolled his chaw and spat reflectively. "Wal," he said, "hit ain't thet I want ter be onsociable—an' I admit the gals is some inducements, bless their purty eyes—but me an' Dave Braddee has been pals sence we was big enough ter tote a squirrel gun, an' I ain't goin' back on him now."

"But he flung you inter the river," persisted Magregor.

"Sure," answered Mike with suspicious mildness, "me an' Dave's always playin' jokes like that on one another. Why, I mind one time when me an' him was little shavers we was playin' Injun. Dave was bein' Colonel Crawford an' I was Simon Girty. He was tied to a stake an' I danced aroun' him a-whoopin' an' a-hollerin'. I had me a bright new tomahawk an' I brung it up, a-glintin' real purty in the sunlight, an' Dave watched it without flunchin' so much as a eyelash. Then I guv a God-awful yelp an' brung it down ker-smash on his head."

Mike paused dramatically and threw away his chaw.

"What happened?" demanded one of the women breathlessly.

"Why, I killed him," answered Mike solemnly.

Magregor didn't appreciate the joke. A cargo of flour worth three thousand dollars in New Orleans was fast slipping through his fingers. "Sence you're so damn' fond o' Braddee," he offered, "we can cut him in on the profits."

Mike looked the man over coldly. "Mebbe yo're forgittin' the boat's his'n already," he said. He took a fresh chaw and worked on it for a moment. "Ef thar's anything I hate wuss'n a redstick," he opined, "it's a galoot thet's allays a-suspicionin', but just the same I got a suspicion yo're just aimin' ter butter me up so ye kin lay yore hands on a gun."

Wal, I wa'n't born last week, an' you ain't goin' ter git at no gun—leastways not none o' these."

A pistol cracked downstream and Mike rose slowly and tossed the tomahawks and knives over the bank, then gathered the three rifles under his left arm.

"I'll jist take this leetle arsenal along ter remember you-all by," he said. "Hit's been mighty pleasant knowin' ye, most purtiklarly the ladies."

When Mike reached the clearing the "Well Come" was already drifting slowly from the shore. He passed his arsenal to Coffeen and held up his hand for a lift that brought him scrambling to the deck. David was sitting groggily by the trapdoor with his head in his hands and Mike saw that it was up to him to get the boat under way. He and Starr took one sweep and Thorne and Coffeen took the other and worked the clumsy craft out into the river. Then Mike stepped the steering sweep and took the patrol's place at the stern. Thorne went below and Coffeen took up his favorite perch at the bow. Starr walked back to where Mike was straining his eyes to pierce the darkness that lay close over the river and shrouded its treacherous shoals and islands.

"Mike," she said in a low voice, "I want to ask you a question."

"Ask away," said Mike.

"How much did you hear of the conversation in the cave?"

"Why, none," answered Mike with suspicious blandness. "I only come up in time to see you throw your gun over the rock an' tell 'em ter put up their hands."

Starr knew that he was lying, but she also knew now that he would never betray Gurdon's treachery to David. Starr touched Mike's brown paw in a grateful gesture. "Thank

you, Mike," she said. "I think, perhaps, you understand better than—than—"

"Than Dave," nodded Mike. "I wouldn't need half a eye ter understand better nor that galoot."

He raised his voice suddenly. "Holy hell," he cried, "we're comin' to an island an' I ain't got no more idea which side ter take than a new-born babe. Coffeen! Git a bucket o' water quick and give Dave a good duckin'. He's got ter come out of it."

David sputtered and gasped for breath, then stood up and looked around uncertainly.

"Where are we?" he demanded.

"'Bout three miles below Cave-in-Rock," said Mike.

David's bleary eyes focussed ahead of the boat and he sprang to the steering sweep.

"The other side, you fool," he cried. "Take the Indian channel. D'ye want to pile us onto a snag?"

They leaned hard to port on the sweep and the boat swung majestically toward the Indian shore.

"All on deck!" shouted David. "Man the sweeps. Hurry it up."

There was a scurry as the sweeps were run out once more. David called Mike and surrendered the steering sweep to him.

"It's darker 'n the gut of hell," he said, "and I got to get up front where I can see better. It'll be a miracle if we get through this stretch of river without scattering flour barrels on the shore like clamshells. You watch your business, Mike Fink, because if this scow goes down, half of what goes with it is that much out of your pocket."

Chapter 45

THE "WELL COME" SWEEPED AROUND A MAJESTIC CURVE IN the Mississippi and came in sight of a log and earth fort perched on the western bank with the red and gold banner of Spain floating above it. Scattered around the fort in no visible semblance of order were several scores of wretched log houses which seemed to vaunt the discouragement of their denizens.

"New Madrid," said David laconically.

Mike viewed the town with interest and found it sadly lacking in the metropolitan splendors of Pittsburgh and Cincinnati.

"So that's the place Colonel Morgan thought he was goin' ter make the capitol of an empire," he mused aloud. "No wonder he gave it up as a bad job an' went back ter Pittsburgh."

"Well, he might've done it," returned David, "if General Wilkinson and his crowd hadn't poisoned the Spanish against him."

"That so?" said Mike. "I knowed this Wilkinson in the Territory. As purty a gentleman as ever come down the crick—an' not a bad soldier, nuther."

"There's those that say different," replied David sourly. "Before he went into the army he held the western trade with the whiskerandoes in the hollow of his hand. That time we went to Orleans in the 'Elzie' we had to sell our cargo through Wilkinson's agent, Daniel Clarke, and give him ten per cent commission."

"Wal," said Mike, "you couldn't a-gone at all if Ginerall

Wilkinson hadn't clared the way by jollyin' the Spanish inter thinkin' he was givin' them the western country on a silver platter."

"That's just where you're wrong, Mike," replied David. "We could've done a power of palm greasing with that ten per cent. As it was, we had to grease the palms and pay the per cent both. That voyage was the beginning of Dad's bad luck."

"Wal, anyhow, Wilkinson's out o' the way now," comforted Mike. "He's got enough to do tryin' to bust Wayne out of the army."

"The hell you say," shot back David. "From what I heard on the river last summer he's still hobnobbin' with the whiskerandoes and promising, when he gets control of the army, to march the western country under the Spanish flag."

"I heerd that, too," rejoined Mike, "but whoever started the story don't know the Legion. It'd be more likely ter float down on Orleans an' swaller it along with Floridy an' Texas."

"With Wilkinson as emperor," said David.

"I thought you was all hot an' heavy fer gittin' the hell out of the United States," accused Mike. "You an' the ginerall ought ter be buzzom pals."

David snorted in lieu of an answer and pretended to give his complete attention to steering. But now that Mike had pointed it out, he realized that he was not as eager to renounce the United States as he had thought. Distance had lent enchantment to the memories of the Spanish territory, but now that he was in it once more he recalled the galling restrictions that hampered the daily life of the settlers. They had no share in their government, they were forbidden to carry on Protestant worship in public, all legal documents had to be written in Castilian, a man could not build

a mill or a forge without government permission, and then he usually had to grease the skids to official approval by a liberal application of palm oil. Why, it was not legal to post an advertisement without the permission of the nearest Spanish commandant. Such restrictions as these made opposition to an excise on whiskey look rather silly.

The "Well Come" slid gently up to the bank below the town of New Madrid. A Spanish soldier stood on the crumbling bank high above the boat and shouted to the voyagers.

"Sounds as though he thinks we'd oughter understand him if ye yells loud enough," complained Mike.

"It's easy enough to tell what he wants," said David, who stood with a ham under each arm ready to jump ashore. "He wants me to go with him to the commandant."

"Hadn't I better go, too?" put in Thorne.

"Not unless you want to risk getting put in the calaboose for bringing snakes into the town," grinned David, and jumped lightly to the bank.

Thorne flushed darkly and subsided. That silly stare of his was too significant to fail of interpretation, he admitted to himself, though he had so far succeeded in concealing the existence of Sir Walter. Sometimes Thorne seemed to be able to stand apart and look at himself; on such occasions the figure that he saw was so sorry that he did not wonder that David and Mike treated him with grinning contempt. Once upon a time he had resented a world that had beaten him down so remorselessly and for years he had schemed to get even with it, or at least with some of the people in it. David Braddee had been one of those he had hated, he remembered, but he found it confusing now to recall the original cause of that hatred, so let it go with hating him because he claimed the "Well Come" and its cargo.

But he had found it harder of late to whip up his resentment, especially since his failure to get rid of David and

Mike at Cave-in-Rock. By rights he should blame Starr for that failure, but he was afraid to say anything to her about it. There was a chance that Starr and the boys had thought him a victim of Buckburrow's conspiracy along with themselves. That had been a lucky shot of his at Buckburrow. He had acted with a celerity and decision that was almost like old times. At any rate, he had killed off the only man who could witness against him directly. There was still the danger, of course, that Coffeen might talk, but he had settled the nigger by taking him to the stern of the "Well Come" and threatening to throw him to the sea serpent if he disclosed what had been said in the cave.

Thorne chuckled when he recalled the darky's terror; then sobered at a sudden thought. Suppose that Coffeen really had seen Sir Walter. That would make the serpent real, wouldn't it? Thorne went below and fortified himself with a swig of whiskey; then, with the cup still in his hand, clambered over the barrels to the stern window. Sir Walter was gone, faithless like all the world. Thorne felt deserted and alone, a once noble man now reduced to a figure of tragedy, and he disconsolately watered his whiskey with his tears.

He was awakened by the stamping of feet on the deck above and the guttural shouts of unfamiliar voices. He felt refreshed, somehow, and when he looked out the window and saw no Sir Walter he felt even better. The "Well Come" was under way, he saw, and he was impelled by curiosity to investigate the owners of the unfamiliar voices. When he emerged above deck David hailed him with unwonted joviality.

"Hi, Captain Thorne," he cried. "Meet our two recruits." He indicated two square-faced, outlandishly dressed men, who were remarkably alike save that one of them was

twenty years the senior. The two men bobbed and smiled over the sweep they were pushing.

"What are your names?" shouted David.

The older man thrust a thumb at his chest. "Me Johann Karl Augustin Fritts," he beamed. He reversed the thumb and pointed at the other man. "Him Johann Karl Augustin Fritts."

"They're father and son. Get it?" said David. "Fritts, major, and Fritts, minor."

Thorne bowed to the Germans with a vestige of his old-time dignity. "I get it," he said. "Methinks you must have had some remarkably potent liquor ashore, Mr. Patroon."

"Well," assented David good-humoredly, "if I did it was only fair exchange for the two good Kentucky hams I took to the commandant. Too bad you weren't along because I'm charging one of the hams to you."

"What do we have to show for them?" demanded Thorne.

"This," replied David, dramatically waving a small piece of paper.

Thorne took the paper and read: "Doy permiso a David Braddee para que pase à Natchez sin embarazo."

"It doesn't have my name on it," he pointed out.

"Doesn't need your name," said David. "This is just to get us through to Natchez." He grinned at Thorne with a little less good humor. "Your name will come up there, all right, when you dump all these manufactured goods on the shore. The Spanish don't like to have such things brought in from the states."

"Then how did we get by New Madrid?" demanded Thorne.

"That was easy," said David. "I told them we had a boat-load of flour."

Thorne grunted and turned away. He hated to admit it, even to himself, but he was coming to depend on David so

much that he dreaded the day when he would have to fend for himself. If only this voyage could go on forever with its long, lazy days and nights, its unlimited whiskey, and the yellow ruffed Sir Walter with his crab-encrusted beard undulating benignly behind them.

The lengthening days of February, 1796, slipped by. On the west was the forest and the swamp, and on the east marched a line of tree-crowned hills that sometimes approached the river in high, cloudy, yellow bluffs at whose feet the river was eternally gnawing, and which were being tumbled bit by bit into the current. Between the hills and the swamp rolled the river in loops so gigantic and oft repeated that a look at the map was enough to make the landsman dizzy. Every loop brought a fresh menace and David nursed the "Well Come" carefully around each point of land to keep it from being thrown by the rushing current upon the snags or the great froth-covered mats of trees that had collected in the concave sides; or perhaps there was danger of being sucked into the crevasses that had been broken in the bank of the river and that drew the water boiling and booming into the swamps. For the river flowed between two vast natural dikes which for a thousand miles coiled above the jungle lands, and, save where the eastern hills came close, were the only powers that prevented it from spreading out into a great tree-clogged lake.

Even when the river straightened out and ran like a peaceful irrigation ditch between its guardian dikes, the need for caution was not over. There were forests of dead trees anchored in the mud and thrusting their trunks above the surface to take vengeance on the living. Sometimes a long limber trunk fast in the mud at one end—a sawyer, it was called—would be sucked down by the current until it was released to spring into the air with a roar that would curdle the blood. Occasionally there would be a sleeping sawyer,

one not quite long enough to spring to the air, but which would strike just short of the surface with a disappointed hum. Woe to the boatman whose evil luck led him within striking distance of a sleeping sawyer, for his barrels of flour would be scattered to the current and like as not the giant catfish would feast upon his carcass.

From the naked forests of the north, relieved only by occasional savannas of scrubgrass waving like distant fields of green oats, the "Well Come" floated mile by mile into a land of deepening spring. The willows and poplars showed green and then the scrub magnolias disclosed an occasional bloom. The live oaks seemed suddenly to drape themselves in the ghostly rags of Spanish moss and the cypress swamp came up to the river, dark and impenetrable as a Dantean slough. The forest on both sides of the river was alive now, enchantingly, menacingly alive. Fresh green cane displaced the scrubgrass in the savannas and occasional deer and buffalo raised startled heads from their feeding, then turned and fled from the river and its strange invaders.

Out of the swamps came the eternal chorus of frogs and cicadas, and at night the harsh bellow of alligators resounded from the jungle and they could be heard bumping against the side of the boat as they scrambled awkwardly from the bank. The sky above and the trees on the shores were a continual revelation of bird life. Fritts, Minor, would often sit with his feet hanging over the side of the boat and play his flute while the pelicans strutted on the shores and self-consciously yawned with their absurd bills, the vultures wheeled silently overhead, and the golden plumaged warblers nearly burst their throats in vying with him.

It was a river both dismal and inspiring and each voyager reacted according to his nature. Thorne would cast a gloomy eye at sky and shore and return to his whiskey; Coffeen fished day and night, and though he never landed the

hundred-pound catfish he coveted, yet he kept the larder well supplied; Fritts, Major and Minor, spoke together in hushed tones as if they were in a vast cathedral, save when Starr, who spoke some German, sat and talked with them. Mike, who never concealed an emotion, would stand on the deck and whoop with exuberance. This was the country for a man, he announced. There wasn't nothing else like it. His share of the voyage's profits was going into a keelboat just as soon as he got back to Pittsburgh and from then on the river would be his home. It was Mike who kept the company supplied with fresh meat; there was scarcely a day when he did not take his rifle and jump ashore at the neck of a loop in the river and hunt until the "Well Come" had floated perhaps twenty miles around the bend to a spot where it could pick him up, often less than a mile from the point where he had come ashore.

Starr's place was usually at the bow, and there she would sit by the hour, silent and withdrawn. Perhaps she had been wrong, she sometimes thought, in trying to draw David away from the river. They were fitted to each other—he and the river—she realized now. There was the same sullen, relentless force that drove heedlessly on toward an unknown goal, the same broad, free sweep that pounded incessantly against the confining dikes. And there would be the same fate if the dikes gave way—a boiling and booming as the current rushed into the swamp lands and then a long stagnation until the water became a noisome breeding place for slime and filth. It was to wean him from such a stagnation that she had sent for him to pilot her husband's boat down the river; but there had been no good effect from it. After all, no one could save him but himself.

From his stand at the steering sweep David looked out across the mile-wide stream and cursed his fate. This freedom had been the morsel he had craved of life, but now

that he had laid hold of it, it had turned to ashes in his mouth. Wherever it turned the river was bound by the dikes it had thrown up during the years, and that was the way with him as well. Whatever direction he turned he found himself facing his past, stopped by the dikes he had built with the aid of Old Tom, and Lawyer Brackenridge, and Daniel Strong, and—yes—Starr Thorne. Time after time he had broken crevasses in those dikes in his efforts to escape, but somehow they had never been large enough to let all of him through. Could it be that a directing Providence was leading him in spite of himself to the half-forgotten delectable country, even as it was leading the river to the sea?

There sat Starr looking up at the Walnut Hills and, though he could not see her face, he knew it wore the half blind expression she always had when she was thinking. Strange how little they had seen of one another through the years and yet how well they knew each other. He had been a dog to make her eat crow, and though he had stopped it long ago, he would rather have bitten out his tongue than have asked her pardon for the offense. David reined himself up sharply. She had had her chance and had refused it. His responsibility was ended and she could look out for herself. That was good, he told himself, for there was no room for a wife in his scheme of living.

A gust of wind smote his cheek with the coolness of rain. David looked up at the lowering sky and cursed himself for a feckless dreamer. A storm was whooping down upon the river with a promise of wind that might raise such waves as would tear the boat apart. A creek lay ahead on the lee shore, but it would take luck as well as skill to reach it.

"Man the sweeps," he shouted, and laid his chest against the steering oar. There was a clatter as the sweeps were run out and though there were three to bend their frantic

energies to each sweep, the "Well Come" had overshot the creek by a hundred yards before it came to shore.

"All ashore," cried David. "We've got to tow back to the creek."

Even Starr leaped overboard in the mud and laid hold of one of the ropes that David tossed ashore. The wind skimmed across the river, rolling up the water as it came, and struck the boat a broadside blow that popped it up and down like a cork. David thrust frantically at the bank with a sweep and shouted for the five straining men and one woman to pull harder. But strain as they might in the slippery mud of the river bank they could barely move the boat. A few minutes of this, David realized, would open the boat's seams and sink it.

Suddenly there was a chorus of yips from the bank above and a dozen Indians dressed in calico shirts and breech clouts poured down and laid hold of the ropes. The "Well Come" responded nobly and was soon safely stowed in the mouth of the creek while the storm howled harmlessly over.

In gratitude the voyagers invited the Indians to feast on the carcass of a deer Mike had shot that morning. They responded gladly. When the deer had been disposed of, even down to the marrow, the leader of the Indians solemnly stuffed the pipe bowl of his tomahawk with tobacco and passed it around for each to puff as a peace pipe. When this ceremonial was finished the chief rubbed his belly.

"Is—kee!" he grunted.

David pretended not to understand but the Indian was not to be put off.

"Is—kee!" he said more insistently.

"He wants whiskey," said Starr suddenly.

"I know it," growled David. "I was afraid of this."

A yip sounded from the boat and the Indians jumped up and swarmed aboard the "Well Come." David and Mike

sprang after them but were too late. A prowling savage had located a half empty whiskey keg and hoisted it to the deck, so nothing would do now but that the red brothers must each have a drink. David filled a quart tincup and the Indians passed it from hand to hand, each religiously taking one swallow.

"That's enough," said David, making a motion of dismissal with his hands. "We've got to go now."

But the Indians were not to be budged, and they made it plain that they intended to have another round. David yielded perforce, but tried to make a condition that they must go ashore before he would give them the cupful. For a moment he thought the ruse would succeed but one stubborn fellow put his arms around the barrel and refused to leave without it.

"Hit's my opinion, Dave," said Mike, "thet you better give him the kag. They're liable ter take it if ye don't. We got more whiskey, anyway."

David yielded and bundled the happy savages ashore with their keg, then lost no time in pushing off. That night the voyagers camped on the opposite side of the river and lit no fire that might betray their location in case the Indians should have decided to come after them for more whiskey or for other plunder.

Chapter 46

LATE THE NEXT AFTERNOON THE "WELL COME" REACHED Grand Gulf. Here the river struck a rocky bluff and was deflected at a sharp angle in such a manner that two eddies were formed, one on each side of the main current. The trick, as David knew by experience, was first to avoid being thrown against the base of the bluff, and second, to steer between the eddies in such a way as to prevent being caught and carried back upstream.

Every hand was called to man the sweeps, while Mike stood beside David ready to throw his supple strength against the steering oar. The "Well Come" was caught in the thread of the current and moved with increasing speed until in the oblique rays of the westering sun the rock at the river's brink seemed to loom above the boat like the bright hand of doom.

"Hold on the starb'd oar," shouted David suddenly. "Pull on the port."

The sweeps grated harshly on the tholes as they were thrust out. David and Mike leaned on the steering sweep and the "Well Come" swung away from the bluff and turned almost into the eye of the sun. "Let up," ordered David. The sweeps were pulled in and the crew disposed themselves on the deck ready to spring instantly to action. The bluff slipped away on the left and the point of land on the right crept closer. On each side the eddies boiled and thrust their whorls into the current as if vying with each other to seize the Orleans boat and spin it in their grasp. The "Well Come" veered uncertainly for a moment, then

with a shudder of fear yielded to the eddy on the left. Before David could shout an order the crew was thrusting out the sweeps.

"Pull together," cried David. "Give them a hand, Mike. We'll be lucky if we get out of here without a race back up the river."

Though there were six hands, including Starr, tugging at the oars the eddy proved too strong. Gradually the "Well Come" was drawn into the swirl.

"Bear down there!" David shouted. "We'll be forced into the eye of the whirlpool."

"What then?" demanded Thorne, who was ready to drop with exhaustion.

"We'd be whirled around so fast our seams'd spring and we'd sink."

At this ominous warning the crew redoubled their efforts, if such a thing was possible. The "Well Come" sheered away from the whirlpool, but now it was being driven to what seemed inevitable destruction on the shore below the scattered cabins of the French village of Grand Goufre. Under David's sharp direction the crew strove mightily to keep the boat in the narrow strip of water between shore and whirlpool that spelled safety. The bluff now loomed on the right once more and the swirling waters of the eddy broke on the rocks at its base in an alarming imitation of ocean breakers. The current of the eddy turned toward the river, and David drove his crew to force the boat back into the thread of the current. This time they were successful in winning free and the "Well Come" triumphantly ran down the river between the two eddies.

In the rear the setting sun reflected its departing glory on the face of the bluff, then gradually died away. The sky where the sun had been was the color of brass and above it floated a fleecy mass that looked as if the Great Spirit had

brought together the smoke from a thousand wood fires. A ghostly white ball appeared in the sky and as twilight deepened it became the familiar moon riding gibbous and golden above the forest. The nightly chorus from the banks rose in unceasing ululation like the denizens of unseen worlds protesting against the intrusion of the monster drifting silently down the current between them.

Over a fire in the sandbox forward, Starr and Coffeen busied themselves turning a roasting goose on a spit supported between two forked sticks. Presently they placed the goose on a wooden platter and Starr carved it deftly while Coffeen brought some hard biscuits and a stack of tin plates and cups from below. David remained at the steering sweep, while the others gathered about the goose and had supper.

This was their last night together on the river, and as if affected by the nostalgia of parting, the voyagers ate silently. He was glad that he would soon be rid of the Thornes, David told himself. Save for the fact that he prided himself on going through with a contract he would have dumped them off at Limestone. Certainly they had been of little help in managing the boat, and he suspected that Gurdon Thorne had had something to do with the incident that had befallen at Big Cave, even though Mike had assured him that he was imagining things. At any rate Thorne's habit of watching things seen only by himself had got on David's nerves, and more than once he had glanced around as if expecting to see the air filled with snakes.

Tomorrow all this would be over; another chapter would be closed and the Thornes would pass from his life forever. Resolutely he fixed his eyes on the future and refused to recognize the nostalgia that tugged at his heart. By some trick of the firelight the shadows were gone from Starr's eyes and her face appeared full and rosy and her hair fell upon her shoulders in a golden mass. There was a seductive-

ness about her that stirred his blood as she had not stirred it since that night so long ago when he had stood with her in the moonlight at the Rocks, the evening of their journey from Federal Springs. This was the way he would always remember her, David knew. No matter what loves came after her, a man could no more forget his first love than he could forget his mother—if he had one.

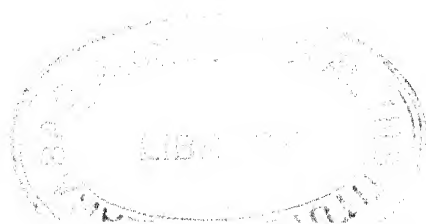
Mike's brassy voice penetrated his consciousness. "Hit ain't thet I don't hold with matri—matri—with gittin' married. Hit's jist thet I got a hankerin' ter see the world. I reckon I allers did have it, but thar was a long time I didn't know what was ailin' me. Kinda figgered it was love, I guess. Mebbe I never would uv found out ef I hadn't come spang up agin Elder Smith's bull. Thet's how I come ter jine the scouts."

Mike waited for someone to beg for the story, but since no one offered to beg he went on just the same. Little things like that never feazed his brashness when he felt in the mood to talk.

"Yes, sir," he said, "ef it hadn't been fer Elder Smith's bull I reckon I'd be a married man this minute a-figgerin' on when ter begin my spring plowin'. I been in a lot o' tight places sence that, but subtract 'em all together in one almighty big 'un an' they ain't no more to be compared to that 'un than a dead kitten to a ba'r with a sore tail."

He looked toward David with a half-challenging air. "I've fought all manner o' varmints from Injuns down ter rattlesnakes but this was the onliest time I was willin' ter quit fust.

"Wal, I was a-courtin' Peg Smith, the elder's darter, in the summer o' '92, an' I even made out ter go ter church-meetin' on Sundays ontill one day in August when I war nigh runnin' off into pure ile an' I decided ter go swimmin' instid. Hit war in Elder Smith's medder, hard by the meetin'



house an' I was a-standin' by the pool a-drawin' off my red shirt when I seen the elder's brindle bull a-comin' at me as severe as the devil arter a soul.

"Wal, thar I war as naked as the day I was born with a bull which had scared more folks than all the parsons in the western country. I'm tellin' you I didn't stand on ceremony but I sidestepped neater'n a man dodgin' a tomahawk an' thet bull dashed by kickin' up the sile better nor a patent plow. I lit out from thar, plumb fergittin' that I didn't have even a buckskin thong on me, but it warn't no use; afore I knowed it thet varmint's breath war a-comin' hot on my flanks. I guv a almighty big spring sidewise an' as the crittur charged by I tackled on to his tail, figgerin' 'at that way I'd allers be behind him no matter which way he turned.

"Wal, the beast looked around at me, then started ter paw an' beller an' kick out his hind feet high, wide, and handsome. But it wan't no use; I'd made up my mind I'd stick ter his tail as long as it stuck ter his backbone, an' stick I did, while thet cussed crittur drug me over briars an' stumps an' stones till my bare feet war raw an' bloody as butcher's meat. An' my name ain't Mike Fink ef thet ol' devil's tail an' me didn't blow out sometimes at a dead level with the crittur's back."

Mike waved a goose wing to illustrate his statement and winked at Starr as he jerked his head at round-eyed Fritts Major and Minor.

"Wal," he continued, "hit war agin' my principles ter holler fer help, but I figgered ef I didn't, I might never live ter holler fer anything else, so I let go a whoop thet musta made the elder an' his congregation think the Mingo was on 'em. At any rate the elder's two dogs, what had a grudge agin' me, heerd my whoop an' come a-runnin' hell-bent fer election. An' I was elected, shore 'nuf. When I seen 'em

comin' I sez ter myself, I sez, 'Ol' Brindle, I'll jist take a deck passage on thet thar back o' yourn,' an' I went up a-flyin' jist in time ter hear them curs snap their teeth whar my heels had been.

"Fer a minute thar was merry hell in Elder Smith's medder what with the bull tryin' ter shake me off an' the dogs tryin' ter pull me off. An' then, as ef thet warn't enough, when I went under a tree I thunk I'd take ter the branches, but the first one I grabbed had a hornet's nest on it. I settled back on the bull's deck quick, but it warn't quick enough. I'll be shot ef thar warn't a half bushel o' them insecks, an' they was all swarmin' down on us.

"You'd've sworn thar warn't nothin' human in thet mix. The dogs lit out fust with a trail o' hornets a rod long arter each on 'em, an' me an' Ol' Brindle warn't far behind. I knowed my best chance ter git away was ter stick on board, but I didn't have nothin' ter do with steerin' the craft, an' anyhow I was too busy a-slappin' at about a quart o' the pests thet was tryin' ter ride me like I was the bull.

"Wal, we was headin' d'rect fer the meetin' house an' when I looked up I see the hull kit an' boodle o' the congregation bilin' out of doors. The elder was fust an' I saw him hold up his hands an' turn white. I reckon he was prayin', on account of not expectin' the devil ter call fer him so soon, an' I must've looked like the devil comin' fer him an' the folks on a special breed o' hell-blazin', horned stallion. Wal, the elder an' the hull congregation, includin' Peg, jist turned tail an' skedaddled fer the road. I reckon not a soul on 'em seen what happened ter me, 'cause jist then the bull reached the fence an' I went ashore, over the crittur's head inter a briar patch. When I come to an' scrambled out o' thar, you kin hang me up fer a target ef Ol' Brindle hadn't run plumb inter a locust post an' knocked hisself out.

"Wal, I limped home an' spent the next two weeks pickin' thorns an' stingers out o' my hide an' swillin' whiskey ter ease the pain an' keep down the fever. When I rekindled I didn't hanker none ter go out in sassiety, so I jist tuk my rifle an' war bag an' lit out fer the tarritory. An' thet's how I come ter jine the scouts."

Mike tossed the remnants of his goose wing into the river and stared at his audience with an air that was half humorous and half belligerent. Thorne snorted and swung around so that his back was toward the company. Fritts, Major and Minor, with true Pennsylvania-Dutch caution, were uncertain whether to laugh until they saw Starr smiling at them. By this time Mike had gone into guffaws at their embarrassment, and they chimed in with abashed giggles that gradually swelled into Gargantuan roars and that soon had everyone, even the dour David, roaring in concert.

If Mike had intended to enliven the party he had succeeded nobly. Fritts Minor produced his flute and accompanied his comrades while they sang *The Battle of the Kegs*.

Then David's call to man the sweeps set Mike and Fritts Major to pacing slowly back and forth while the boat swung gently around a majestic curve and Coffeen jiggled to Fritts Minor's flute. David straightened his steering sweep as the boat started down a reach. Suddenly he lifted his voice in the song of the Ohio boatmen and Fritts Minor accompanied him, first hesitatingly, then with greater assurance.

The boatman is a lucky man,
No one can do as the boatman can,
The boatmen dance and the boatmen sing,
The boatman's up to everything.

Hi-O, away we go,
Floating down the river on the O-hi-o.

THE DELECTABLE COUNTRY

When the boatman goes on shore,
Look, old man, your sheep is gone,
He steals your sheep and steals your shote,
He puts 'em in a bag an' totes 'em to the boat.

Hi-O, away we go,
Floating down the river on the O-hi-o.

When the boatman goes on shore,
He spends his money and works for more.
I never saw a girl in all my life
But what she would be a boatman's wife.

Mike broke in with his brassy tenor and, as usual, added the finishing touch:

Hi-hip, away we rip,
Floatin' down the river on the Massassip.

And then, because he was feeling merry, Mike must needs raise a mournful song, and Fritts Minor accompanied him. Presently the others joined in one by one as the words came back to them.

Oh! It's love was the 'casion of my downfall,
I wish I hadn't never loved none at all!
Oh! It's love was the 'casion of my miseree;
Now I am bound, but once I was free.

He has a beautiful voice, thought Starr, looking at David standing by the steering sweep with his face turned up to the moon. As clear and pure as a bell, it was the voice of the David that she loved, not of the sullen, hard-faced young man who had taken his place during the last year. If only the old David would come back to stay there was

nothing else she could ask of life; she would not even ask that she might have him for her own. It would be enough to know that somewhere he lived in that delectable country of which he had once spoken.

The song died away but Fritts Minor played on, pouring into the music of his flute all the melancholy of his sombre German soul. On the banks the voices of the swamp creatures were stilled and the boat floated through time and space on a stream of golden, haunting melody that seemed to be one with the primitive, golden night. It was a moment when every soul on the deck of the "Well Come" was laid bare in the moonlight. Thorne stared raptly at the form in the wake of the "Well Come" that broke the shimmering surface of the water with slow undulations. Mike sat leaning against the ladder by the trapdoor, tense in every muscle, as if preparing to spring into action. Action was the key word with him, sudden, unreflective action—a fight, a drinking bout, or a love passage, it mattered little which.

Coffeen lay staring up into heaven with the gleam of tears in his eyes; his was the yearning that comes to every man, and that each interprets in his own way, freeman or slave. Fritts Major's face wore an expression of ineffable peace; he asked nothing but to live and let live, to work hard during the day and to sit by his stoop in the evening with his pipe and stein and dream the simple mystic dreams of the pietistic German peasant.

David's and Starr's eyes met in the preter-natural brightness of the moon. His hardness is a mask, she thought. Underneath it lies the anguish of a soul in torment. Nothing matters to him now but to escape. But where can he go for his tormentor is within? If only she could take his head in her lap and smooth away the pain, perhaps her old David would return. Perhaps the bitterness and the

hate would go and leave the eager, fervent boy thirsting to know and understand.

She is suffering, thought David, suffering even more than I am. But it is not within, for she is at peace with herself. She suffers because of me. There was a time when she was afraid—afraid of life, and death, and everyone around her. But none of them have power to harm her now, none of them but me. If I could only take her in my arms and look into her eyes and tell her she need fear for me no more.

The notes of the flute died away in a last yearning strain. There was a moment of deathly stillness, then the refrain of the creatures of the swamp enveloped the "Well Come" again. A cloud floated across the moon like a sheeted ghost and hid the souls that had lain naked on the deck. David raised a clenched fist at the uncomprehending sky.

"It is my suffering you see, God," he cried within himself. "Mine—David Braddee's. Torment others if you please, but you presume too much when you scourge me, for I will yet win free from you in my own way. Nothing shall make me yield! Do you hear me, God? Nothing shall make me yield! Nothing! Nothing!"

Chapter 47

DAVID LATHERED HIS FACE WELL WITH STRONG SOAP AND tested with his thumb the edge of his hunting knife. It had an edge almost as good as a razor. He then leaned back against the ladder and propped between his knees a tin pan with bottom so well scoured that his lathered face was reflected as in a mirror and drew the hunting knife down one cheek. The "Well Come," under Mike's guidance, steered away from the weather-beaten cliff on the eastern shore and headed south.

"We're in sight o' Natchez," announced Mike suddenly.

David paused and shifted his hunting knife to his left hand. "Keep her in the thread of the current," he said. "We'll enter the eddy below the town."

The side sweeps were hauled in and the voyagers stood looking eagerly at the town that was for most of them a prospective home.

On the right the river was cutting into the low, forested plain and carrying the soil across to the left bank and depositing it at the foot of the cliff. On this new land lay the elongated settlement of Natchez-under-the-Hill. Its shanty-like houses were cocked precariously on the hillside with their fronts jutting out toward the river and their backs dug into the hill, for all the world like fetid badgers sampling the morning air, uncertain whether to emerge from their burrows. Above this disreputable string of ware-houses, barrel houses, and bawdy houses, the bluff rose in folds to the tree-crowned plateau on which were scattered

the houses of Natchez-on-the-Hill dominated by a small hexagonal fort.

David had sheathed his hunting knife and wiped the soap from his face. He now took the steering sweep from Mike and studied the current and the landing space. The "Well Come" was opposite the last house of the lower town when, with the side sweeps manned once more, David edged over into the ascending eddy and came to rest near the foot of the road that angled up the bluff to the upper town. David scanned the bank for the usual Spanish soldier whose duty it was to lead flatboat patrols to the government house.

"No sign of a guard," he said finally. "He's probably drunk in a pot-house."

"What should we do?" asked Thorne, who was not unmindful of his dubious situation as the importer of a quantity of manufactured goods.

"You and I will have to go up to the upper town," answered David, "and try to locate the governor."

"I heerd tell," interjected Mike, "thet American boatmen ain't allowed on the hill 'thout a guard."

"Well, I'll have to take a chance," said David. "You-all stick close to the boat and don't let anybody on board till you hear from me. That may not be until tomorrow if the whiskerandoes are as slow as they used to be."

He jumped from the boat to the yielding mud of the river bank and Thorne followed clumsily. "Remember what I told you, captain," he warned Thorne as they started out. "You're here to buy a plantation and settle. All this hardware is strictly for your own use."

David turned for a last admonition to Mike. "Whatever you do, stay away from the pot-houses. There isn't a Diego in town but what's itching to roll you for every cent you got and turn you over to the alcalde for a month in the calaboose."

David and Thorne walked slowly up the dusty hillside road. The ramshackle houses of the lower town dropped away and with every step the view over the river and the forest beyond became more extensive. An ox cart with screeching wooden wheels descended slowly and the Americans clung to the bluff while it passed. A negro driver in ragged cotton shirt and drawers waved his goad and spoke cheerily in patois. David became tired of suiting his pace to Thorne's exhausted drag and, with a curt explanation that he would wait above, forged ahead.

At the top of the hill a well traveled road skirted the edge of the bluff; on the south it descended from the fort, and on the north it disappeared into the trees. A little to the east were the scattered houses of the upper town, one-story, low-roofed bungalows with shaded verandas and many doors and windows.

There was no building in sight that looked pretentious enough to be the government house, so David decided that when Thorne arrived they would go into the town for directions. Presently down the road from the fort came two bewhiskered gentlemen whose swords and semimilitary clothes proclaimed them to be officials of some kind. At the sight of David one of the officials, a tall, dark man of perhaps forty, turned to the other and spoke sharply in Spanish, and though David did not understand a word of the remark he guessed that it had something to do with the presence of a boatman on the hill. David hastened to make his business known.

"I am looking for the government house," he said. "Can you tell me where it is?"

The tall Spaniard looked at David curiously, said something to his companion, then turned away with an indifferent shrug.

"No Ingleses," he said.

"Ubi gubernatoris domus?" said David in Latin.

The Spaniard swung about sharply and inspected the young American with interest.

"A boatman speaking Latin!" he exclaimed in English.

David flushed angrily. "Oh, so you do speak English!" he said.

The Spaniard inclined his head gravely. "You have my most humble apology, sir," he said, "but I could not know by your dress that you were a gentleman."

The statement was more of an explanation than an apology and was given with a cool self-possession that said plainly that no gentleman owed courtesy to a mere boatman, and that carried with it a mild rebuke that a gentleman should appear in Natchez-on-the-Hill in misleading garb.

It was on the tip of David's tongue to deny tartly that he was a gentleman, but it occurred to him in time that if he were accepted as an equal by the Spanish his business would be greatly expedited.

"Rough work demands rough clothes," replied David. "I saw no guard in the lower town, so ventured to find my own way. I hope that I have not committed an unpardonable offense."

"Not at all," the tall Spaniard protested. "But let me introduce myself. I am Don Manuel Gayoso de Lemos, governor of the Natchez, and this is my friend and secretary, Señor Nunez Maria Cabrera de Martinez y Méndez." He paused expectantly.

"I am David Braddee, of Pittsburgh, at your service," supplied David.

"Ah! And I suppose that like every other American you have come to sell your goods and settle."

"That is my intention," answered David, "if I can get

enough for my flour to give me a start. The profits of the voyage must be split with my partner."

"And is he with you?"

"Yes, sir. We have also a passenger, a Captain Thorne, who brings equipment for a plantation and is desirous of obtaining land at once. Here he comes now."

David introduced Thorne to the governor and the secretary. Though the captain was in his best clothes the marks of dissipation and incompetence were so plainly set forth by his pinched face and meager frame that Gayoso turned a shoulder on him and addressed David.

"I should be honored, Señor Braddee, to have your company and Captain Thorne's at dinner. Business can well wait until after that."

David accepted the invitation with alacrity. The government house, it now developed, was north of the town and in a situation from which activities on the river and in the lower town could be observed. As they walked along the northward road at the edge of the bluff David learned that the Spanish government welcomed American immigrants and permitted religious freedom and Protestant worship in private. A Methodist preacher, name of Daniel Strong, had lately come into the district but his activities could be winked at so long as he kept away from the Catholics. After all, it didn't matter much which road a man traveled if it led to the same pearly gates.

Yes, there was too much tobacco being grown in the district. Something had gone wrong with the indigo crops of late years—worms and dampness chiefly. Cotton culture was the thing now. The town already boasted one of Mr. Whitney's cotton cleaning engines and there was talk of introducing another. This gin arrangement was an interesting sight, well worthy of a visit. It was located in the lower town and was motivated by two horses. It could

turn out five hundred pounds of clean cotton a day, of which one-eighth part was retained by the owner. Yes, land was cheap and plentiful, even near the town. There were several plantations for sale at the moment at five dollars the acre. Perhaps, if the señor consented, a trade could be arranged—flour for land. Oh, I see, he wishes to visit New Orleans. The señor shows laudable discrimination. New Orleans is the finest sight in the Spanish dominions north of Mexico City and—with a leer and a metaphorical poke in the ribs—doubly so for a young man. When they arrived at the government house they found a rubicund gentleman whom Gayoso introduced as Señor Worthington Smith.

"Señor Braddee," explained the governor, "and Captain Thorne intend to settle. Perhaps you can turn a penny by providing them with plantations."

"Delighted, I am sure," wheezed Mr. Smith. "Our card, Mr. Braddee. Our card, Captain Thorne." He produced two cards on which were printed in dog-eared italics the legend: "Messrs. Worthington Smith, Pemberton Jones, and Anderson Brown, Commission Merch'ts and Land Agents. Natchez-on-the-Hill."

"We aim to make ourselves useful in any capacity we can," he pontificated, "but the care of newly arrived settlers is our special province, gentlemen, our special province. Are you a married man, Mr. Braddee—a paterfamilias, perchance?"

"Neither," answered David.

"Indeed, indeed!" returned Mr. Smith, dropping his voice in deepest sympathy. "We need families here, Mr. Braddee—families. Literally thousands of acres going to waste. A crying shame you are not married." He brightened suddenly and mechanically as if someone had pulled back a curtain. "But then there are doubtless compensations, Mr.

Braddee, compensations. There's a power o' purty gals in the world—he, he!—a power o' purty gals. And let me tell you you've come to the land that breeds the fairest women, sir, and the fastest horses, sir, and the longest cotton, sir. Now about that land—"

"I am in no position to invest," interrupted David, "until my partner and I dispose of our flour."

"Ah! A cargo for sale! Let us handle it for you, sir. We guarantee top prices and a minimum commission, sir—top prices and a minimum commission."

"Well, I am planning on going on to New Orleans," said David. "Captain Thorne, however, plans definitely on staying here."

"So I understand, sir, so I understand." He drew David aside and eyed him shrewdly while he spoke in a tone barely above a whisper. "If there should be a sale, now, to the gentleman with you—say, three hundred acres or so—if there should be a sale, I say—at a good price, mind you—there might be a little sweetener for a certain party—he, he!—a little sweetener, Mr. Braddee. You could use a little extra cash, eh, going to Orleans as ye are, now, couldn't ye? A little extra cash—he, he!—Mr. Braddee."

Señor Smith beamed his best imitation of a sly old dog and poked David in the wamus, then turned aside abruptly to cultivate Gurdon Thorne.

Dinner was a bountiful repast of game and pastries, and afterward the negro butler brought in a silver tray loaded with cakes, raisins, nuts, and cheese. Over the deserts Gayoso expanded mightily and entertained his guests with anecdotes of his school days in England and of his travels on the continent. Presently cards were produced.

"What do you say to a game of whisk, gentlemen?" suggested the governor with an elaborate show of indifference. "It need not detain us long from our duties."



Señor Worthington Smith gulped his wine hastily and licked his lips while the rapt light of a card fiend glowed in his eyes.

"Can't say I object, governor, can't say I object," he assented with a bored tone that was belied by a sidelong glance at David. The secretary, who had had little to say during the meal, stolidly carried a card table to a window that gave a view of a stately park and of the river.

David mentally reckoned up his finances. The governor and Señor Smith, he felt certain, were out to trim him and Gurdon Thorne, and it dawned upon him that they'd better lose if they wanted any favors from Gayoso. The cards were cut and Gayoso and Smith were high men. David and Thorne sat opposite each other. His partner, David knew, had once borne a reputation as a good player and it was barely possible that he had not lost the knack. There was no way now of passing him the word that he must lose and even if he could do it, David doubted if Thorne would assent.

David drew out six half-joe pieces—sixteen barrels of flour at Maysville, he reflected bitterly—and laid them on the table.

"I am not particularly well heeled," he said, "and this is all I can risk now. When it's gone, I'm out of the game. Perhaps when I return from New Orleans—if I make a fortunate sale—I can flip another card with you gentlemen."

Smith's eyes glistened with cupidity and the governor looked gravely from the gold to David.

"You must be very fortunate in love, my friend," he said, "if you plan on losing that much at cards."

Thorne flushed darkly and matched David's stake with six gold pieces of his own. "One hand, one joe?" he queried. Gayoso and Smith nodded.

"About a year ago," said the governor as he dealt the

cards, "I had a visitor from Pittsburgh, a certain Señor Bradford. Do either of you happen to know him?"

Thorne studied his cards sullenly, but David, who had an ax to grind, answered readily. "I have met him," he said. "He was a big man in the Monongahela country."

"Hm!" commented the governor. "A little *too* big by his own account. A jealous government tried to put him in the calabozo, and he had to flee."

"There was some unpleasantness for a while," said David. "A number of excisemen were tarred and feathered and one of them had his house burned."

The governor turned up the trump. "I hear that Secretary Hamilton took advantage of the opportunity to advance some arguments to the effect that the West was still a part of the United States."

"Thirteen thousand of them," replied David dryly.

Gayoso chuckled appreciatively. "Pittsburgh made a mistake in being so close to Philadelphia," he said.

"Mr. Braddee can understand the cogency of your remark," said Thorne with malice. "He spent six months in the Philadelphia prison after the insurrection."

The governor glanced briefly at Thorne. "Indeed!" he answered in a tone that implied rebuke. "I fear that the liberty enjoyed by the citizens of the United States is greatly overrated. Perhaps doddering old Spain is not so bad after all, in spite of her Inquisition and her lack of democratic folderol."

David painstakingly misplayed and Thorne glared at him. David's gorge rose. The further he went into the Spanish dominion the more certain he became that if he wanted freedom he was heading in the wrong direction. He tried to picture himself bribing Alexander Hamilton by losing at cards, and allowed himself a sardonic grin. He delib-

erately disregarded Thorne's lead of the knave and played a small club.

Gayoso took in Thorne's thrusting glares at David with amused tolerance and counted his tricks. "Señor Smith and I each take a half joe," he said. "Señor Bradford was a most deplorable card player," he reflected. "He lost forty joes to me at one sitting. I was most happy to aid him in obtaining a plantation from the crown lands near Bayou Sara."

An hour later the players rose from the table with Gayoso and Señor Worthington Smith each three joes to the good and with Gurdon Thorne so angry at David that he could scarcely hold his temper. The governor glanced coolly at Thorne as he swept his share of gold pieces into his pocket.

"After all, señor," he said, "this is the only way we Spaniards have of getting our gold back. You Americans sell us flour and pork and take away your pay in gold and silver—never in olive oil or oranges."

It was now time to discuss business and Gayoso proved most amenable. Señor Cabrera wrote a pass which permitted David to go on to New Orleans with his cargo of flour and Gayoso signed it with a flourish. At David's hint Gayoso also signed a note to the warden of the port directing him to permit Gurdon Thorne to land his manufactured goods without payment of the duty on condition that they be transported at once to his plantation or held under seal in the government warehouse.

Señor Smith now took charge and offered to whisk—he, he!—Captain Thorne away to look at a plantation fifteen miles from town which was being held for eight dollars an acre. Soon after dark Thorne staggered aboard the "Well Come."

"I bought the plantation," he announced thickly. "Jewed him down to six-fifty an acre—two hundred of 'em."

"If you'd lost your money to the governor like a gentleman," said David acidly, "you might have gotten a thousand acres for nothing."

"For nothing?" echoed Thorne. "What do you mean?"

"I mean," returned David, "that we were supposed to lose at cards. It was a genteel way to give a bribe."

"Well, why didn't you tell me?" demanded Thorne.

"Because I didn't realize it until we sat down to play," answered David. "Anyhow, you should have tumbled when Gayoso told about helping Bradford to crown land after he had lost forty joes at cards."

For a moment Thorne stood aghast at his own stupidity, then abused nature had her revenge. He ran to the end of the boat and was loudly and violently sick. Never had there been anything like it since the whale had cast on the Joppan shore the runaway Israelitish prophet wrapped in a seaweed poultice.

By the middle of the next morning Thorne's belongings had been loaded on an ox cart and started for his new plantation under the care of Coffeen. Fritts Major and Minor had agreed to work for Thorne until fall; their intention, they freely admitted, was to learn the agricultural peculiarities of the region at the expense of others before venturing their capital in a plantation of their own. At the top of the bluff the Thornes, by wordless common consent, sat down on the grass and looked at David and Mike with their three Creole recruits working the "Well Come" into the current.

Thorne looked after the "Well Come" with a twinge of regret for the carefree life of the river. Sir Walter was swimming off after the boat, though he did turn to shake his ruff in a farewell that had a touch of wistfulness in its rakishness. There had been something noble about Sir

Walter—a hallucination a man could be proud of. But after all Sir Walter was a marine creature and could scarcely be expected to change his natural habits just because his hallucinator had gone ashore. Thorne watched with a feeling that the glory had departed. For him the future bore nothing but a tangle of lesser colubines.

This might well be her last sight of David, thought Starr, looking down at the figure in the stained white hunting shirt at the steering sweep. It had been a fruitless voyage, with nothing to comfort her but the being close to him, indifferent as he was. Two nights before, for a little while she had thought he was drawing nearer, but that had passed and only bleakness remained. Perhaps it was better so—better than if they had run away together. She could not have borne to have him come to hate her. Life would go on whether he loved her or not, and a century hence there would not be even a ripple in time's current to show that they had passed. Why, then, since happiness was so fleeting, must mortals strive for it so desperately? Perhaps because that was all there was for them—once they had failed to grasp happiness, life had nothing left for them.

The "Well Come" had passed from the eddy to the main current and was swept past the dingy village under the hill. David seemed to look up and raise a hand in farewell. Starr told herself that he was merely giving an order to the Creoles, but she hugged the ray of hope to her. It seemed to fill a little the aching void where her heart should be. Swiftly now the "Well Come" ran down the river until it was nothing but a tiny speck on the horizon, with an even smaller white speck above it. This was the way she wanted to remember. She closed her eyes slowly and turned away. She stood up and reached her hand to the

man beside her. Here, she told herself with a sigh of resignation, was her fate. Lancaster, Pittsburgh, or Natchez, it mattered little to her. The sun had gone out of her life and all that remained was darkness.

Chapter 48

THE CREOLES WERE A PERPETUAL SOURCE OF AMUSEMENT and irritation to David and Mike. Scarcely a word of each other's language did the Americans and the Creoles know, and David was forced to give his orders by gestures. At first David tried to learn a few words of French patois, but he soon gave it up as too complicated. Their language, as Mike suggested, was between a sneeze and a song, and indeed they seemed to drag out their vowels to inordinate lengths and to put in *z*'s wherever there was breath left to utter them.

Mike undertook to teach them the names of the various parts of the boat and its equipment, but they proved to be as dense at learning "American" as David had been at learning Creole. In his exasperation Mike exhausted his ordinary vocabulary of profanity and drew upon a splendid but little used array of German blasphemy that he had learned from a Pennsylvania-Dutch uncle. He had no more begun than the face of one of the Creoles lit up with comprehension.

"Ja, ja, ja," he spluttered. "Ish sehr gut Zie verstehen. Ish spreche Deutsch—Ish spreche Deutsch."

Mike stopped swearing and summoned enough German to carry on a halting conversation with the Creole. Finally he turned to David.

"He says that his folks came from Germany almost a hundred years ago an' settled on the 'Cote,' whatever that is, above Orleens along with hundreds of other Germans.

A lot o' them still speak German there, but they know French too."

David nodded. "I remember, now. It's the *German Coast*, about twenty miles above the city. One of our boat's crew on the 'Elzie' was a Dutchman, and every night we stopped on the Coast he'd get up a dance. The girls were as pretty as pictures and didn't mind being kissed even though they couldn't understand a word we said."

Late on the second day after it had left Natchez the "Well Come" rounded a sharp turn and entered Long Reach, a straight channel of twenty-three miles. At the end of the reach was the mouth of the Red River and a little later the current set strongly into a bayou and the crew was sharp set to keep from being drawn in.

"It's the Bayou Atchafalaya," commented David. "When the river's high, it sends a branch thataway on a short cut to the gulf. It means we're in the delta of the Mississippi now."

"But there's still bluffs on the east," Mike pointed out.

"Well, there won't be very long. From now on we'll have to hump ourselves to keep from being drawn into the bayous that're in a hurry to beat old Mrs. Sipi to the ocean. One of 'em goes right by the back door of Orleans. They say the British used to bring their boats up thataway from the gulf when they owned Natchez. I guess it isn't used much now. Too many snags."

Presently Mike fell into a long and rather heated argument with the German.

"He claims," explained Mike finally, "thet thar's a prairie out thar called Attakapas whar they kin pasture cattle, but if you dig down two feet you kin catch ocean fish. Sounds like milkin' a tomcat ter me."

David smiled. "Well," he said, "this whole country here

is soil washed down from upriver. I reckon a lot of it is just tangled logs and mud with grass growin' on top."

"You don't say!"

"Sure. Haven't you heard of the Red River raft? The trees clog up the river for a hundred fifty miles and have trotted down so solid that you can plant gardens out over the river current."

"Glory be!" grinned Mike. "Kin ya imagine the cattle grazin' peaceful-like out thar an' then all of a suddint a whale comes up through the prairie an' spouts a stream o' lamp ile all over 'em? I'll wager them cattle's so skittery from seein' onnat'ral sights thet they never kin git fattened up."

At Point Coupée, three days below Natchez, the wildness of the river banks gave way to well cultivated plantations. The river was now confined by levees knit together by thickets of palmetto and crowned by orange and lemon trees in bloom. Settlements of dingy houses mounted on stilts and surrounded by pink-blossomed peach and plum trees appeared at intervals, and for every village there was a neat white chapel with a graveyard of whitewashed brick tombs. At intervals, in the dense shade of groves of live oaks or magnolias there were pretentious white plantation houses perched on tall brick foundations and with flights of steps ascending from the ground. In the evening, when the houses were lighted, the voyagers could sometimes see the planter gathered with his family around the dinner table while a blue-coated negro passed around with a tray of steaming food.

The river ran swiftly in a stream of reddish-white mud between its confining walls and more than once David had the impression that if he could rock the boat the water would go splashing over the rims and wet the feet of the negro children playing on the levees. The levees seemed

to be the highways for the country and there was never a long time when a horseman, a wooden wheeled caleche, or a negress with a basket balanced on her head was not in view. The Creoles spent the daylight hours in pantomiming or shouting badinage at the shore dwellers and never failed to receive answers in kind. Either the Creoles possessed great wit or little wit was needed to make merry, for there were times when the "Well Come" seemed to float between gales of laughter.

Though the cultivated strips extended little more than a mile from each bank, the river itself gave evidence of the populous and thriving settlements. There were rafts of logs going to the sawmills at New Orleans, bateaux and flatboats loaded with agricultural products and livestock, and catamarans piled high with bales of cotton and sacks of corn. Occasionally a boat rowed by cotton shirted negroes sped by with a white planter and his family reclining under the awning in the stern and bound for a visit to a neighboring plantation or a stay in New Orleans. There were signs, too, of the penetration of the restless Kentuck in the occasional flatboats and keels from upriver, and once the "Well Come" steered well into the thread of the current to avoid a Monongahela-built ship that had blundered into the levee at a turn. The ship had no masts or steering gear, but was handled by long sweeps manipulated from a platform built three feet above the deck.

Drifting between the two lines of plantations was like passing between continuous gardens. The odor of peach and orange and magnolia was ever present. At night when the "Well Come" was tied to the levee and David lay on the deck listening to the eerie croak of the frogs and the distant bellow of the alligators in the swamps behind the plantations, the damp heavy fragrance seemed to wrap him as in a cloud. This was another world, a scented interlude

in a life of futility. Peace enveloped him even as did the fragrance of the orchards, though he was never far from the consciousness that pain lay before and behind him just as the noisome swamp hemmed in the odorous façade of the river.

The "Well Come" reached New Orleans one morning in mid March. As the boat swung to the north around a sweeping curve in the river there was the glimpse of a stately pillared mansion through a vista of pecans and oranges, then of a canal hedged with Spanish bayonets. A section of the levee planted with willows and backed up by scattered warehouses came next, and a score of squat flats moored under the willows gave evidence that this was the Ville Gravier, the sector reserved for Kentucky commerce. A little downstream a brick-faced fort loomed over the levee and beyond it lay the roofs of the city stretching south and north along a gently curving shore. In the midst, high above the common houses, rose the twin towers of the cathedral and the flat roof of the Cabildo, and along the orange-shaded levee clung a dozen ocean-going vessels.

The "Well Come" slipped from the current into the eddy and drifted slowly upstream past frowning Fort St. Louis. There had been a gentle rain at dawn, enough to hold the scent of the blossoms close to the ground, and as the boat slid quietly up to the willow-grown levee along Tchoupitoulas Road the fragrance seemed to rush out to meet the voyagers as if bidding them welcome to New Orleans. Two of the Creoles leaped to the levee and snubbed ropes around the willow trees. The sweeps were drawn in and a broad plank thrust out to bridge the gap between boat and levee. A guard in blue uniform and with black leather straps crossed on his breast came nimbly aboard.

"'Oo iz ze ownaire?" he demanded.

"We own it together," replied David, indicating Mike and himself.

"Zen you will please to come wiz me," said the guard.

He started along the levee at a brisk pace and David and Mike followed closely. They passed through a gap in the stockade between the fort and the river and found themselves looking across a strip of rutted common at the water-front warehouses and stores on the Rue de la Levée. A dingy, ramshackle wooden building in the lee of the fort proved to be the customhouse. The guard stood aside at the door and Mike entered a cubicle whose most magnificent furnishing was a very Spanish looking little man in pointed beard and plum-colored coat. David held out the passport he had received from Gayoso.

"I am David Braddee, late of Pittsburgh in Pennsylvania," he said, "and this is my partner, Michael Fink. We have a flatboat load of flour which we intend to offer for sale."

The little man stood up behind his desk and bowed profoundly. "The tap o' the marnin' to yez, gintlemen," he said with an Irish brogue so thick it could have been cut with a knife. David and Mike looked at him with patent bewilderment while he glanced over the passport, then bowed again, an ace lower than before.

"Sure an' begorra, it's proud I am to obleege any friend o' Governor Gayoso," he said. "I trust ye had a plisant v'yage?"

"We did thot," answered David before he could check himself, then added quickly, "Am I to take it that you are Irish, sir?"

The little man drew himself up proudly. "Sor," he announced, "I am Señor-r José Mar-ria Arna Echavorr-re de Siguenza y Madr-rigal y Lannanna—a descindant, sor, o'

the bluest blooded hidalgos o' Leon, Ar-ragon, Old Castile, an' New Castile."

"I intended no offense, sir," said David, struggling to smother his amusement. "I only thought there was a slight touch of the Irish on your tongue."

"Ah! Si, si, si, si, si! Yis, yis! I larned my English from Feyther Dinnis Carr-r-igan, may the saints rist his shoul, an' he was born and bred in County Down."

"And an excellent teacher he proved to be," said David diplomatically. "The better because, as we Americans say, no teacher can be greater than his pupil."

The descendant of the hidalgos flourished a goose quill amiably and wrote a line at the bottom of David's passport.

"Is it possible," ventured David slyly, "that the señor acquired from the good Father Carrigan a taste for the usquebaugh of the Irish?"

The Spaniard's swarthy countenance positively beamed. "Ah!" he breathed, "next to my native Amontillado wine I esteem usquebaugh. It is, as Feyther Dinnis say, the nictar o' the Gaelic gods."

"We have, my partner and I," said David, "a half keg of Monongahela rye, guaranteed to be the pure distillation of forty proof lightning. One whiff of it will make the dawn come up an hour before its nat'ral time, and two will make a field mouse reach down a tomcat's throat and flip him inside out."

It was the señor's turn to look bewildered, but presently he rallied with an uncertain laugh. "It mus' be, señor," he offered, "the juice the prophet sing about, to make the—w'at-you-call—the desert blossom like the nose."

Mike burst into a Gargantuan roar and clapped the little Spaniard on the shoulder. "Yo're all right, Seen-yor Etcet-eray!" he cried. "I'll lay my bottom dollar on you every time."

"'E will w'at?" the Spaniard appealed to David, as he wriggled his stinging shoulder inside his plum-colored plumage.

"He means he will back you to the limit," explained David. "It is the highest compliment a Kentuck can pay. And you shall have that whiskey before you're an hour older."

Mike went for the "nictar o' the Gaelic gods" while David set out in search of a purchaser for their flour. He had noted in passing a rambling one-story warehouse, a stone's throw outside the Tchoupitoulas Gate, bearing in English, Spanish, and French the sign "Terheyden Drew, Commission Merchant." The interior of the warehouse was the neatest David had ever seen; bales of cotton, barrels of flour and molasses, and hogsheads of tobacco were arranged in exact rows; not one barrel projected beyond the one below it, but was placed as precisely head to head as if the warehouse was a demonstration in mathematical precision.

The office was a paneled and glassed compartment in one corner. Within it at a high desk four clerks on high stools labored over ledgers and sheafs of papers. A young man ushered David into an inner office.

"Mr. Drew," said the clerk, "this is Mr. Braddee." He withdrew, closing the door behind him.

David stifled a gasp as he saw the merchant rise and offer his hand. The man's face was scarcely more than a mask, hideously distorted as if drawn and scorched by fire. David took the proffered hand, but gazed in fascinated horror. Smallpox and fire together would have been hard pushed, he thought numbly, to do this. The merchant was undisturbed by David's stare; probably he had come to expect it after a lifetime with that face. He pumped David's hand, and a quick, mechanical smile gave him an odd, fleeting charm, as if the ghost of his real countenance had peeped out.

"Mr. Braddee!" he exclaimed, "I'm certainly proud to meet ye. My runner is a dilatory cuss—like all these Creoles—and I was afraid he would miss you."

"Well, I'm here, anyway," answered David noncommittally. Mr. Drew opened a cabinet and revealed a battery of precisely ranged decanters and a neat row of glasses. The office was another marvel of mathematical arrangement, with safe, closet, wine cabinet, desk, and chairs placed as carefully as sentries.

"I can offer you whiskey, rum, port, or claret," said Mr. Drew. "Most folks from the states prefer whiskey, but I've schooled myself to drink claret. One can't be too careful in this climate—nothing easier than to drink oneself into a premature grave."

"I'll drink with you, sir," said David.

Mr. Drew poured two glasses of the blood-red liquor and handed one to David.

"To your successful voyage," he said, and sipped his wine. "How did you leave affairs in the states?"

They sat down in two of the elegant, geometrically placed brocaded chairs and David tried not to appear to be studying the merchant as he answered this and a string of other questions. Mr. Drew was a spare, well-set-up gentleman of perhaps fifty with neatly tied chestnut hair. He spoke with an accented nicety which bespoke generations of breeding and which made his occasional crude expressions seem like oaths in the mouth of an infant. In spite of his seeming abstemiousness the nervousness of the hand in which he held his wine betrayed the fact that he led a life filled either with hard work or with dissipation—it was weeks before David learned which. Meanwhile he set the man down as an inordinately smooth article in spite of his scarred face and waited for the battle of wits to begin.

Apparently, however, it was Terheyden Drew's policy to

let the other man introduce business. He talked on and on concerning matters far from business affairs while he ranged pencils and rulers on his desk in a succession of geometrical figures. Occasionally he would stop for a moment and regard a figure with an air of satisfaction, then he would tear it up and construct another.

At last David found himself taking advantage of a lull to state that he had three hundred and twenty-six barrels of prime flour for sale. Drew looked up from a rhomboid as if business was the farthest thing from his mind.

"Hm," he observed, "Monongahela flour is too soft for any but the cracker bakers. However, yours is one of the first boats to reach the city. I can offer you nine dollars a barrel, provided you are willing to take a draft on my Philadelphia correspondent. If you want specie I can offer you eight dollars a barrel and in addition you will have to pay the government six per cent on whatever part of it you take away."

"Give me a thousand dollars in cash and the rest in a draft and the flour's yours at eight and three-quarters a barrel, providing my partner agrees."

"Done."

David was astounded at the quickness with which the business had been concluded. He had expected long drawn out chaffering in an effort to beat down his price and he was nonplussed at having received a reasonable offer at the outset. He rose abruptly.

"I am sure there will be no trouble about accepting your terms," he said. "At any rate I'll see you within the hour."

The merchant smiled his quick smile. "I'll be expecting you," he said.

Chapter 49

AS DAVID EXPECTED, MIKE READILY AGREED TO THE TERMS of the sale and the deal was soon closed and Mr. Drew's roustabouts took charge of the "Well Come." Then with a thousand dollars divided between their pockets and Mr. Drew's strong box David and Mike settled down to enjoy New Orleans. Their first care was to locate a boarding house and after inquiry they found one in the Ville Gravier behind Mr. Drew's warehouse and not far from the government tobacco magazine on the Calle del Almazen. The boarding house was a rambling, one-story structure, with walls of bricks set between posts and stuccoed; though it was only three or four years old the damp winters had already stripped the stucco off in patches and given the structure an authentic air of antiquity.

The mistress of the establishment was Madame Bridget Lala—born Bridget Moriarty—who boasted in a comic mixture of Gaelic and Creole accents that American gentlemen would find her establishment pleasing because she specialized in American cooking. David and Mike had scarcely disposed their rifles and war bags in the cubicle that was to serve them as a chamber when a gong announced dinner. There was the thunder of a herd of mules in the corridor.

"Come on, Dave," shouted Mike. "If we aim ter git anything ter eat we'd better git the rag out."

Dinner was well under way when they reached the dining room, but they found seats at opposite ends of the table and managed to spear meat, yams, and cornbread from the central platters and to ladle bean porridge from steam-

ing bowls set at strategic intervals. If liberal doses of pepper in everything that would take it, from bean porridge to meat sauce, constituted American cooking, then Madame Lala was justly proud of her unique position in New Orleans. Mike's first taste was of beans, but they were so hot with pepper that his cheeks ballooned and his eyes popped with surprise and pain. The Kentucks laughed heartlessly and Mike reached for his mug of sticky Creole coffee to cool his burning mouth. The coffee proved to be a bitter surprise and Mike spewed it out over his neighbors.

"Water!" he shouted, pounding the table with a hairy fist. "Bring me some water and take away this goddam slop."

A negro girl came running with glass and pitcher and Mike cooled his throat with great gulps of cloudy Mississippi water, then ate his dinner slowly and with a wry face.

There were about thirty men at the table, all Americans save for Monsieur Lala. That gentleman was Mr. Drew's runner and at the same time runner for his wife's boarding house when he was not sipping wine and playing vingt-et-un in the shade of a live oak. David looked about the room curiously. Most of the men were hunting-shirted Kentuckians but three or four were clad in the coats and small-clothes of clerks or merchants. One of the latter was seated next to David and now turned to him with a friendly smile.

"My name is Philip Nolan," he said, "and I bid you welcome to Lala's. You won't find the food so bad after you get used to it."

"American cooking!" said David bitterly. "My name's David Braddee."

"Indeed!" returned Nolan with a note of surprise, as if

he had heard the name before. Then—"Is this your first trip to New Orleans?"

"No," replied David, "I was here four years ago."

"Oh, I see. Then you know something about the place."

"A little," said David cautiously. The note of surprise in Nolan's voice had not been lost on him and he knew instinctively that the story of the loss of the "Elzie" had reached the American colony in New Orleans. He studied Nolan while they talked and it did not take him long to decide that the man was no clerk. He was a tall, dark, athletic-looking man in the middle twenties who looked the part of an adventurer, and it was not long before David was to learn that he was just that. Now, however, Nolan talked of New Orleans as if its gayety and color were the two things in life in which he was most interested. Its climate, its food, and its amusements were the best in America, and its women, particularly the quadroons, were the most beautiful—and the most complaisant—in the world.

The dishes were cleared away and most of the men went out, but a few remained to spend the afternoon playing cards. David, Mike, and Nolan stood by the window looking across the immense truck gardens which stretched away to the swamp.

"This is our club room as well as dining room," explained Nolan. "Most of the boarders are transients. They'll be leaving a few at a time to go north over the Natchez Road or perhaps will sail for Havana and Philadelphia on the 'Centurion,' which leaves in about a week."

At this, Mike pricked up his ears. "Let's go home by sea, Dave," he suggested. "I've always wanted ter see the ocean."

"Perhaps," said David. "I thought I'd like to stay here longer."

Mike winked at Nolan. "'Pears ter me I ricollect somethin' about the sloe-eyed gal bein' here," he grinned. "Mebbe we kin git a later boat. How about it, mister?"

"Sailings are very uncertain," answered Nolan. "It may be a couple of months before another one leaves for Philadelphia."

"Hell!" exclaimed Mike, "I can't wait that long fer my keelboat."

"Well, you go ahead," urged David. "I'll come later—if I come at all."

Mike bit a piece of tobacco from his pigtail and passed it to David and Nolan.

"Come on, Dave," he said. "I want ter git in some licks today if I only got a week ter see Orleans in."

"Be sure you're in by eleven o'clock," warned Nolan, "or the guard will put you in the calaboose for the night."

"Eleven o'clock!" echoed Mike. "Why, I couldn't even git drunk by then onless I started drinkin' airy in the mornin'."

"I'm going to the Cabildo," said Nolan. "Perhaps I could accompany you that far. There have been many changes here since '92, what with the fire and all the new construction, and it might be of interest to have the principal buildings pointed out."

Nolan, he soon disclosed, was an Irishman by birth, a Kentuckian by adoption, and an Indian trader and wild horse catcher by occupation. He had just returned from Texas with a herd of remounts for the Spanish army and—he winked at David—certain officials had been kind enough, at a price, to let him dispose of some of his horseflesh to the planters.

They strolled through the gate of the stockade near Fort St. Louis and along the levee. On their right, in the form of a crescent, flowed the muddy Mississippi, and along its shore clustered the shipping. On their left, with the street

level perhaps ten feet below the river, they could look across the roofs of the town. Nolan pointed downstream to the distant bulk of a fort.

"That is Fort St. Charles," he said, "the lower limit of the city. Most of the Louisiana regiment is quartered there or in the barracks close by." He swung his arm around toward the back of the city. "There are three other forts back there—you can see them if you look carefully. The stockade runs between the forts from St. Charles around to the river again at St. Louis. Just what use all these forts are I can't imagine. Certainly they wouldn't keep a determined enemy out very long. There's not a dozen cannon in all of them put together."

"Perhaps they're not intended to defend the city," put in David.

"Then what would they be for?" said Nolan.

"Why, to keep down revolution in the town."

"Well, I never thought of that," admitted Nolan, "but it looks reasonable. The Spanish have been on tenterhooks ever since the troubles began in France, and the insurrection in Pennsylvania threw a fresh chill into them. By the way, you said you were from Pittsburgh, didn't you? Did you see much of the insurrection?"

"Too much," said David laconically.

Nolan threw him a keen glance and dropped the subject. "The stockade is so rotten," he said, "that it's fallen down in places and people have no difficulty in getting out if they can avoid the sentries. Personally I'd rather spend the night in the calaboose than wade the moat. All the dead cats and dogs in New Orleans end up there, and all the garbage that isn't dumped on the streets or the levee."

A Creole lad squatted on the levee and grunted vigorously. Nolan grinned. "Life is lived here with an openness that is startling to Anglo-Saxons," he said. He pointed to

a negro mother who was slipping her camisole from her shoulders to suckle her infant and then to a group of naked negro children playing under the orange trees. On the roof of a flat-topped house several half-clothed Creoles were taking a siesta, and a young couple busied themselves with the preparatory stages of dalliance.

"If John Knox could only have seen New Orleans," murmured Nolan. "What a pity to have wasted his prudery on the Scotch."

Seen from the levee New Orleans presented itself almost as a toy village. David had the feeling that at any moment the river would slop over into the town and the ships would go sailing down the narrow streets. Long, tiled roofs descended from high peaks into jutting eaves which were sometimes extended into wooden awnings over the sidewalks. The houses were raised on brick and post walls and many of them had odd galleries perched under the eaves and overlooking charming gardens with shell walks, flower beds, and low orange trees. The basements, which were on the street level, were used for stores and workshops, and the main floors for living quarters. Everywhere there were stairs; stairs descending from the balconies into the gardens, or intruding brashly on the narrow sidewalks and forcing the pedestrian to go into the mud of the street to get around them.

They reached the center of the town and looked from the levee over the spacious Place d'Armes. Nolan indicated a one-story building with a protuberant sky-lighted porch and a narrow, unkempt garden.

"Governor Carondelet's house," he said. "Pity he doesn't set those lazy niggers of his to work on the garden." He pointed across the Place to a large brick church with two hexagonal towers with rounded tops. "The Cathedral of St. Louis," he explained. "The unfinished Casa Curial is on

the right and the Cabildo, or government house, on the left. They were built by Don Andres de Almonaster, who has killed three birds with one stone as neatly as ever I saw it done."

"How is that?" inquired Mike.

"Why, he agreed to build the cathedral at his own expense if he was given the contract to erect the Cabildo and certain other public buildings. It worked out very nicely. He put up the cathedral with the profits and gained credit with mother church and with the king. Rumor has it that he is listed to be made a Knight of Carlos III. Thus may virtue ever be rewarded."

They walked between the blooming yucca plants in the Place and by the towering scaffold reserved for important sinners against the king's peace. At the pillory in front of the Cabildo, Nolan took his leave and David and Mike walked around the Place to the market just below the orange crowned levee where the rigging of the ships were thrust upward like cobwebs into an incredibly blue sky. The rounded arches of the market house resounded with the cries of butchers and mongers of fish and fowl and reeked with the putrid offal of years of decay. Here and there the black folk had set up their little stalls, where they sold sherbets, ginger beer, and *estomac mulatre*, the gingerbread of the Americans.

"Pralines, pralines," came the high-pitched voice of a gentle, shrewd-eyed, old negro man, and David bought two of the patties for Mike and himself. Bare-legged young negro women passed, straight and slim with market baskets on their heads, their nubility accentuated by their clinging red or yellow skirts and frankly scanty camisoles. Indian men, with feathers in red-dyed hair and with red-dyed scars on face and belly, sat in the filth displaying for sale bladders of bear oil, and rabbits that they had shot with

blowguns. Beside them their women offered basketry and firewood. Hunters from the bayous held up fat game birds and joked in their buzzing patois with the mulatto women behind the stalls. A cart passed with six-foot wheels screaming as if they were in agony; the Spanish had decreed that cart wheels should go ungreased, remarked David, in order to prevent smuggling.

Four years ago, David remembered, the scene had fascinated him, but now he felt a nameless revulsion. He had forgotten the foul odor, the decaying garbage with dogs and vultures tearing at it, and the myriads of flies and skittering vermin. The cabarets with the yellow-painted stucco falling from their brick-and-post sides gave forth an odor of unwholesomeness and the yellow girls making eyes and suggestive motions as they leaned against the walls were scrawny and toothy. Night, it occurred to him, was essential for sin—night and the blindness of whiskey.

Chapter 50

A CABARET WITH A RECESSED GOTHIC DOORWAY AND A FEW cobwebbed panes of glass flaunted its stained yellow ugliness at a corner.

"That candy made me thirsty," said Mike. "How about a little snort?"

In the dark bowels of the cabaret there was a bar of white pine and half a dozen spider-legged tables, and a heavy oak door led to the section devoted to Venus in the back of the house.

Half a dozen round-jacketed sailors and a few townsmen were bracing themselves for the evening's debauch by a few preliminary slugs of rum.

"Whiskey!" said Mike peremptorily as he dropped down at a table. The Catalan proprietor brought a bottle and two tiny finger-marked glasses and set them down carefully. Mike cursed him roundly and held up two fingers.

"Two bottles!" he shouted.

The meaning was inescapable and another bottle appeared beside its mate. Mike drank heavily, glass after glass, and growled that the stuff had water in it. The first requisite to fun, in his opinion, was a skinful of panther sweat, and it would take more than one skinful of this hog wash to raise the hair on a mosquito's neck. Nevertheless, he persevered manfully.

As he drank David became more than ever puzzled that he had once thought New Orleans romantic, and there was more than a little hurt with his puzzlement. It was, he saw now, a filthy warren of old-seeming new houses, pock-

marked from fallen stucco and biliously yellow from smears of the Pensacola mud that was brought in by the shipload to be used for paint. Even the scrawny gardens with their orange blossoms could not drown the stench of white, and yellow, and black humanity squatting do-lessly in its own filth.

Mike was walking to the bar and David knew by the glad, fierce light in his eyes that he was drunk to a turn even though he stood straight as an oar and moved without a perceptible weave. He pounded the bar with a hairy fist and raised his brassy voice in a joyous yip.

"Mike Fink's my name," he shouted. "M-i-c-h-e P-h-i-n-c-k-e."

The sailors and the townsmen regarded him with an owlsh dignity that fired his anger.

"Laugh, you drunken, rum-swillin' sons o' sea hags," he shouted. "I make my jokes ter be laughed at an' I don't perpose fer any man ter make light of 'em."

So far the sailors had merely been mellowed by their potations, so they obliged with a degree of good humor. Mike glowed at them like a friendly, moon-faced Buddha, then flapped his arms and crowed.

"Cock-a-doodle-doo! I'm a Salt River roarer! I'm a ring-tailed screamer! I loves the wimming an' I'm chockful o' fight! I'm half horse an' half cock-eyed alligator an' the rest o' me is crooked snags an' red-hot snappin' tartle! How would any o' you gents be disposed toward a genial little brawl?"

The seafaring gents lowered their eyes before Mike's bold stare and covertly measured the distance to the door. Rivermen were feared and hated by the seamen from the ships that landed at New Orleans and evidently this group shared the fear, at least.

"Jist a friendly little de-scussion," wheedled Mike. "I

g'arantee not ter gouge out more nor one eye nor bite off more nor one nose apiece."

The sailors were still reluctant and Mike began to glower. He sidled a little, then leapt toward the ceiling.

"Whoop!" he shrieked. "I kin out-run, out-jump, out-shoot, out-brag, an' out-fight, rough an' tumble, no holts barred, ary man a-tween Pittsburgh an' Orleans. I kin drink more, bar'l fer bar'l, chaw more tobaccy an' spit less, an' roll more gals than ary man thet ever come out o' the timber. Come on, you monkey-faced limejuicers, you rum-swiggin' Yankee blue-bellies, you Orleans nigger chasers, an' see how tough I am ter chaw. I ain't had a fight fer a hundred years an' I'm spilein' fer exercise. Cock-a-doodle-doo!"

At the last crow Mike came down in the familiar pose with his head low and his shoulders bowed. The sailors almost knocked one another down in their stampede to get out of the cabaret. Mike followed them to the street and crowed derisively after them in the gathering darkness. As he turned back into the inn his glance fell on David and a baleful gleam came into his eyes.

"Stand up, Dave Braddee," he commanded. "I owe you a couple o' thrashin's an' yo're gonna collect on 'em 'fore yer a hour older."

David had become thoroughly immersed in one of his sullen moods and he rose with alacrity. Mike's head came down again and he launched himself at his friend. A split second before they would have met, David slipped lightly aside and the thin boards of the bar splintered as Mike's skull crashed into them.

David broke the riven boards loose and pulled Mike out from under the bar. A foot to either side and Mike would have dashed out his brains against the studding. He heaved Mike upon his shoulders.

"Bring us more whiskey and something to eat," he or-

dered the Catalan proprietor and kicked open the door to the back rooms. In a curtained alcove he dumped Mike upon a bunk, and presently, when the landlord appeared with bottles and lighted candles, forced some whiskey between his teeth. Mike groaned and sat up, sobered by the shock, but with a head pounding like a blacksmith's hammer.

"What hit me?" he demanded.

David grinned. "You wandered into the business end of a mule," he said.

Mike felt his head dismally. "The next time I offer ter let a mule kick me," he said, "remind me ter request him ter remove his shoes."

He gulped a glass of whiskey that David poured for him, then seized the bottle and gulped noisily. He shook his head tentatively.

"That's better," he said. "Reckon I could stand a little go at some grub, Dave."

"It'll be in any minute," said David. A yellow girl appeared with a tray laden with steaming dishes. Mike thrust an exploratory finger into a grayish mixture that might have been rice and bits of meat.

"What's this?" he said.

"Jambalaya," the girl grinned toothily. There was a tell-tale blotch on her cheek, but evidently Mike didn't see it or didn't care.

Mike tried a spoonful of jambalaya and reached for the whiskey bottle.

"It's hot," he sputtered. "Why th' hell d'you frogs empty th' whole pepper pot inter yore stews?"

The girl giggled and Mike pointed at some brown disks. "What's them?"

"Oystaire," said the girl.

Mike regarded them curiously. "I've heerd of 'em," he

reflected, and sampled one as he pointed at a sad-looking pudding with repulsive-looking black spots in it.

"Zat plom doff," said the girl bowing over it proudly. "Ze sailor Americaine lov eet."

Mike kissed the girl resoundingly on her full red lips. "What's that?" he laughed.

The girl giggled. "A kees," she said, and nuzzled her chin in Mike's hair. Mike jerked aside.

"Holy hell, gal," he remonstrated, "my scalp ain't in no condition ter be fooled with. I'm a sick man, I am. Hyar, sit on my knee an' feed me gentle-like."

The girl plopped down with one arm around Mike's neck. She picked up a chicken leg and held it between her teeth while Mike gnawed at it. David helped himself to the jambalaya and ate stolidly. A second mulatto girl appeared and tried to wax affectionate with him, but he shook her off and went on eating. Now that night was around him and whiskey in him he still felt an acute distaste for debauchery. The sight of the food turned him sick and he signalled for the second girl to take the dishes away. She piled them hastily on the tray and he heard them rattle as she set the tray down on the floor in the corridor. The next moment she was on his knee with one arm about his neck, her camisole low over one shoulder, and trying to snuggle her half-naked dugs against his face.

Mike was now well awash with whiskey and he and the other girl were sprawled frankly on the dishevelled mattress. David was filled with infinite disgust at the rustle of the straw; there would be cockroaches and other forms of low life in the soggy pile, but none half so disgusting as the blotched yellow girl writhing above them.

The heavy sickish-sweet odor of the mulatto on his knee was overpowering. Suddenly she began working on him in a frenzy of clawing, biting passion. He stood up and the girl

fell to the floor, scrabbling at his legs and convulsively burying her face between his thighs. David kicked her into a corner and there she lay, shuddering and panting while he strode across to Mike and removed a rouleau of Spanish dollars from his pocket. The two lay exhausted, with a glaze almost of death in their eyes.

"I'll keep them for you," said David, thrusting the dollars into his shirt. Mike could take care of himself until morning.

The girl on the floor raised a shrill whine which quickly rose into a broken negroid babble, and though David could not understand a word of what she was saying, he knew that she was cursing him by all the gods of her dark ancestors. He threw her a couple of dollars and went out. In the dimly lighted hallway he stumbled over the tray of dishes; behind him he saw the girl's wild face thrust through the curtains and her enormous mouth was open with maniacal laughter.

He fled into the taproom and past the burly landlord out into the comparatively pure air of the night. The market was empty and all the gay promenaders and chaffering hucksters gone; the street was as silent as a tomb and as dark as one.

A whistle sounded from the rear of the cabaret. David hesitated, struck by an odd fragment of memory. Catalan highbinders, he had heard, had dogs trained to hold their victims until their masters came up. David turned and started running up the river with all his might. He cursed himself for a fool that he had ventured into the city unarmed, then as a whitewashed fence loomed beside him he paused to wrench a picket loose. A long dark shadow coursed swiftly into sight—he could see it against the white pickets—then ran in snapping at his legs. David brought the picket down on the shadow with all his might. The

board snapped in his hands but the animal grovelled and howled in the street with a broken backbone.

Another shadow was coming now, swiftly and silently past the white background. There was a peculiar low whistle from the direction of the cabaret. The shadow broke stride, then launched itself straight at his throat. David's bare hands went out to meet it and man and dog rolled in the dust of the street. The beast was as heavy as a wolf and as savage, but the man was heavier and had tight hold of its thick fur. He rose to his knees and then to his feet and swung the squirming animal skull first into the fence.

The next moment David was sprinting again. A pistol bullet flew wide of him and he turned right at the corner, then stopped and listened. There was no sound of pursuit. From far away came the faint yowls of the dog with the broken back. The cabaret keeper would stop there until he could put the animal out of its misery. Perhaps there was time to get back to Mike.

David ran as swiftly and as silently as he could until he was in the backyard of the cabaret. He paused at the back door for a moment and listened intently. There were no sounds save those from the adjacent houses. He pushed the door open and entered. The curtained corridor was just as he had left it; within the cubicle Mike lay snoring while the girl knelt by him searching his pockets. At David's entrance she looked up snarling. He struck her on the jaw, heavily and without compunction, and she slumped to the floor.

David stooped and with difficulty hoisted Mike across his shoulders, then walked through the taproom and out into the night. He trotted by the deserted market house and ascended the levee, then picked his way down the filth encrusted slope until the mud of the river was under his feet. There, between the bow of one ship and the stern

of another, he thankfully lowered Mike into the water and vigorously soused him in the muddy current.

Presently there were signs of life flowing back into the inert body, then Mike sat up and protested blasphemously.

"Hold your trap," warned David. "We're not out of danger."

"Danger? What d'ye mean?"

"I mean that you might have been floating down the river instead of sitting in it. Now shut up and see if you can walk."

Mike was getting groggily to his feet when a voice with the salt marshes of Connecticut in its timbre sang out above them.

"What's goin' on down there?"

"We're gettin' sobered up," replied David.

A pipe glowed briefly above them. "If ye're black ye'd better git the hell home," said the voice. "It's two bells—time fer the nine o'clock curfew."

Mike was properly indignant. "Do we sound like niggers, ye rum-swizzlin' salt herrin'?" he demanded.

The voice chuckled and the pipe glowed again. "Ye do that," said the man hoarsely.

Mike would have stopped to argue but David dragged him up the levee and toward the Tchoupitoulas Gate. At the gate a petty officer in charge of the guard held a lantern to their faces and asked some questions in Spanish, then let them go on.

In their room David briefly told Mike what had happened and tossed him the rouleau of dollars.

"There's your money," he said. "It nigh cost me my life to save it for you. And you had a narrow squeak, too. I think maybe we're even now for that time you drug me out of Big Cave."

"No, you ain't," said Mike. "Yo're one up on me. Mrs.



Thorne would a-gotten you out o' that ruckus slicker'n a peeled saplin' if I hadn't been within a hunderd miles."

David blew out the candle and lay staring out of the window at the stars. Strange how Starr's name had come up on this night of all nights. He felt that a part of the night's sordidness had clung to him and made him more than ever unfit for her. Suddenly he realized that in his heart of hearts he had never given up the hope of making her his wife. But he could not have her and his freedom, too. He would as soon be dead as a housebroken nincompoop. Life was slow and sombre and somnolent, like the drowsy murmur of the tawny river, save that now and then there were—as there had been tonight—flashing points of sharpened awareness, panting moments of murderous combat with man or nature, even as the river had its whirlpools and windstorms and whipping sawyers. The delectable country was far above and beyond him now, as unattainable as the world of reality which a man in a nightmare knows exists beyond his ken, but which makes the terror that grips him no less horrible.

Chapter 51

DAVID WENT NO MORE TO THE CATALAN CABARETS WITHIN the city ramparts, but wandered along the levee or sipped a harmless glass before the more sedate cafes. Mike, who had learned nothing by his narrow escape, save that he should never go out without his knife, sought the company of the Kentucks who lodged briefly at Madame Lala's, and occasionally when he was passing a barrel house David would hear the scout's brassy voice clarioning to the world that he was the child of the snappin' turtle, he was.

To the more sedate of her boarders Madame Lala served tea under the live oak in the garden every afternoon, and little urging was needed for Marguerite, the fourteen-year-old daughter of the house, to summon black Telemache and his violin and sing to them one of her rollicking Creole songs with a haunting undertone of sadness. One of her favorites concerned three ducks on a pond. Another one ran thusly:

Dans mon chemin j'ai rencontré
Trois cavalières bien montées,
L'on, ton, laridon, danée
L'on, ton, laridon, dai.

Supper was the most refined meal of the day at Lala's, for the Kentucks were usually engaged in barrel house orgies, and there was never more than a half dozen left to grace the board. But invariably there was after the meal

Telemache's violin and a kitchen wench or garden boy with nimble feet and silver throat to aid in passing a pleasant hour. They were rewarded by Madame Bridget with wine and by silver bits from the guests.

A week passed quickly and the master of the "Centurion" announced that his ship would weigh anchor at dawn of Good Friday. Mike viewed with reluctance the prospect of tearing himself from the yellow gals and the cabaret brawls, until Nolan gravely assured him that the girls of New Orleans were like icebergs compared to those of Havana. And then, also, there was Mike's dream of owning his own keelboat to be fulfilled. That summer he planned to serve an apprenticeship pushing a pole for Bull Canady or any other patroon who would take him on; then the winter he would devote to selecting timber and supervising the construction of the best keelboat ever made. The "Good Cheer" he had elected to call it, for reasons known only to himself.

The mists of night still lay low over the river when David and Mike passed through the Tchoupitoulas Gate and walked along the levee toward the "Centurion." On their right lay a slim, clean-cut galley with a pennant at her peak and no less than twenty oarsmen seated at the tholes. A couple of cloaked men came hurriedly up the side of the levee from the town, and one of them, a tall fellow with a pointed beard, looked through David with insolent eyes that seemed vaguely familiar. The two men sprang aboard the galley and at a sharp command the boat was pushed from the shore, headed up the river.

The galley faded into the mist and David and Mike went on to the "Centurion," just opposite the market house. The sun rose across the river and the mist began to drift away as they ascended the gangplank. A familiar hoarse voice was shouting orders to scurrying seamen. David laughed.

"Mike," he said, "you can spend your voyage arguin' with the bosun or whatever they call him that you're not a nigger."

The owner of the voice turned and saw David and Mike. He was a broad man with Galway slugger whiskers passing from ear to ear under his chin. "Rivermen," he said with a fine note of contempt. He beckoned to a seaman. "Watts, show them where to stow their duffel."

"Only one passenger," said David, jerking a thumb at Mike.

"Then what the hell're you doin' aboard?" snapped the petty officer. "Git off afore ye git sideswiped with a boom."

"Not a very respectful cuss, air he?" observed Mike softly.

"Best let me handle this, Mike," said David. "You'll have to live with him for three or four weeks."

"Did ye hear me?" shouted the bosun. "Git the hell off my deck."

Mike rocked on his heels with enjoyment.

"What do you keep in them whiskers, lobscouse?" inquired David. "A pet cockroach?"

The man snatched a handspike and sprang forward. Suddenly a heavy brogan met him in the midriff and he bent over with surprise and pain. David calmly hoisted him over the bulwark and pushed him into the water.

"I reckon I *had* better go now," said David, "before these salts throw me after him." He grasped Mike's hand. "Take care of yourself, Mike."

"Take keer o' yoreself, Dave."

David walked to the levee and sat down under an orange tree while the bosun crawled damply up the muddy bank. Far from resenting their bosun's disgrace, the seamen were lining the bulwarks enjoying the show.

It was an hour before the "Centurion" got under way,

and Mike would have spent the time on the levee had not David suggested that if he left the ship the crew might pull in the gangplank. Eventually the officers appeared on the levee and after some valedictory skirmishing about, the ship moved slowly out into the river.

"Take care of yourself, Mike," shouted David.

"Take keer o' yoreself, Dave."

David stood rigidly on the levee following with his eyes the gray web of the departing "Centurion" until far downstream it became one with the funereal ghostliness of the live oaks. "Take keer o' yoreself," Mike had said in the words of farewell that both of them knew so well. Many times as lads they had used the expression carelessly when parting for a day or a week, then later when parting meant that they would not meet for a year or more. David recalled his sight of Mike on the deck of Bull Canady's keelboat the day they had fought on the bank at Pittsburgh and how Mike had lifted his bandaged face and croaked that farewell. He heard it again with a wrench of the heart as Mike clung to the sweep in the turbid Ohio and shook his fist at the man whose friend he had been and would be again. Uncouth Mike was, and brutal as the frontier itself, but he was a friend.

David felt strangely alone in an alien city; almost he wished that he had taken the "Centurion" and fled. But no, he needed time to think, time to think without even Mike to disturb him. He was suddenly conscious as he had been on a certain May night years before that there was a difference between them. He had come far in those years and learned much, but life was still a tangle in spite of his attempt to reduce it to its primitive elements. For weeks the knowledge of his failure had been growing on him, but now that Mike was gone, the consciousness closed in upon him with a pressure that turned his heart to lead. The

delectable country, he reflected bitterly, was farther from him than ever before. Perhaps—perhaps he would yet have to retrace the steps he had come since those days in the Walnut Street jail.

David turned away and walked up the levee in the morning shade of the orange trees past the matutinal noise and stench of the market. Below him on the bank a dog and a cat disputed the possession of a pile of fish, unmindful that there was enough food there for a battalion of scavengers. A shadow passed swiftly over the combatants and a buzzard drifted down, lifted its tail with a gurgling salute, then fell to tearing at the fish.

There was a banging of shutters in the market house on the other side of the levee and David crossed over and glanced down. The butchers and fishmongers were slamming the lids down over their stalls and preparing to depart, and the vegetable sellers were streaming up the street toward the Place d'Armes, bearing their empty baskets jauntily on their heads. A general exodus was occurring, and everyone was going in the same direction. Half consciously David joined the throng and was borne along to the Place. Hundreds of people were gathered there, Creoles and negroes, and they talked together in tones low and sad as if they would never laugh again.

Beyond the cathedral David found the streets occupied by knots of soldiers and tradesmen, waiting apparently for something to happen. Even the houses, he noted, seemed to wear a funeral air and some of them were hung with crepe.

Suddenly a military band struck up in another street and the groups straightened into columns. Down a cross street marched the band, playing a slow and solemn air, and after it came a hundred blue-coated soldiers, stepping with a slowness that was in strange contrast to their usual military vigor. David pushed his way to the front and watched

a knot of robed priests pass by, bearing crosses and tapers, and looking like Hebrew prophets in their long beards. Two of them bore an enormous crucifix with blood streaming realistically from the wounds of Christ, and two others carried a chair in which was seated the image of a woman dressed in the height of Spanish fashion and bearing a placard with the words, "La Purísima Virgen." From the windows and balconies flowers were thrown upon the Virgin and the priests who bore her chair until the dusty street was gay with yellow and red and white blossoms.

There was a phalanx of Ursulin sisters in white guimpes and trailing, wide sleeved, black robes; then several stout fellows in hangmen's hoods carried a gallows from which was suspended the effigy of a Spanish soldier with a placard bearing a long Spanish inscription suspended about the neck.

"Judas! Judas!" shrieked the bystanders, and someone threw a clod which fell from the blue coat of the effigy to the black hood of one of the hangmen. The crowd groaned and hissed and more clods were thrown.

Suddenly the groaning stopped and the people both in the procession and on the sidewalks fell to their knees and crossed themselves. The host, borne on a bier decorated with flowers and gauds, had stopped at the corner and the bishop, who followed behind under a priest-borne canopy, moved his hands swiftly as he blessed the crowd.

The procession went on, the governor and his suite, resplendent in court dress, and then more soldiers and a column of the devout, men and women, bearing crucifixes or lighted tapers. The host reached another corner and the procession fell upon its knees once more. David looked about in doubt for a moment, then dropped down with the others. Before him a veiled woman in black drew a taper



from her robe, lit it from the flame of the one she held before her, and held it out to David.

"Come," she said.

David took the candle as if in a dream and walked slowly beside the veiled woman. Before them rose the despairing chant of the priests, fraught with all the sorrow and woe that had afflicted mankind since the world began. Once more the procession knelt and as the woman sank beside him David caught the fragrance of jasmine. A hand stole from the blackness of her robe, fingers twined for a moment in his, there was a fierce, almost convulsive pressure, then the hand was withdrawn. But David needed no sight of her face nor of her burning sloe eyes to know that for an instant he had held the hand of Arcola de Cavalini.

The procession rose and moved on. The suppressed desire of long months on the river swept over David. His mind went back to that last night with Arcola in Louisville and he shuddered with ecstasy at the memory. Never before had there been such a night—never, perhaps, could there be such another. The jasmine seemed to envelope him now in erotic waves, bearing a promise that sent the blood pounding to his temples. Suddenly there came back to him the image of the tall Spaniard who had descended from Arcola's chamber stroking his beard as if he had the world by the tail. Don Luis Megarrity, colonel of the Louisiana regiment! He it was who had departed less than three hours ago on the Spanish galley.

The procession was on the Rue de Chartres now, near the pillories, and on the Place d'Armes the many colored crowd knelt devoutly while the bulk of the scaffold towered over it and the tall spikes and waxen white blossoms of the Spanish bayonet thrust up through it at regular intervals. The doors of the church were open and the procession was slowly making its way inside. The giant crucifix, the

Virgin, and the host rose slowly in turn and disappeared. The thunder of the organ was surging from the doors with the chant of the priests as they walked slowly down the aisle. The people were pressed together now and their tapers were extinguished lest they set one another afire. A hand was on David's sleeve, struggling to keep its hold, then was torn away.

"David!" came Arcola's despairing voice.

He turned his head as if he had not heard, but with the tail of his eye he could see her struggling to get back to him. He edged away from her toward the brick wall and saw her swept through the doors. The crowd spun him around and bruised him against the bricks but passed on without him. When the worst of the press was over he elbowed his way through the disappointed remnants of the procession and walked rapidly toward the levee. He knew at last what had brought him from Natchez to New Orleans, but now that it was within his grasp, something held him back. He must have more time to think.

Chapter 52

IT WAS SUNDAY EVENING BEFORE DAVID VENTURED BACK INTO the city and he only went then because Nolan proposed that they take the air on the levee and he could not refuse without being thought churlish. The religious devoirs of Easter had been attended to in the morning and now all New Orleans had turned out to enjoy a holiday. Down the streets that debouched upon the levee, people could be seen dancing to the rasp and twang of stringed instruments and the dulcet ripple of flutes. Little tables were set out before the cafes and at them sat placid old gentlemen smoking their pipes and sipping their wine or beer.

The Place d'Armes was almost as crowded as it had been on Friday but with a different tempered throng. Christ was safely risen, the gayety of the people seemed to say, so let there be no sorrowing for another year. The market was open for business and they descended from the levee and walked between the market and the little shops that lined the Rue de la Levée.

Two pickaninnies scampered in front of them and Nolan laughed and playfully swung his cane after them. Mr. Terheyden Drew appeared, picking his way among the offal cast away from the butchers' stalls and now and then disputing his passage with the curs. As he looked up and saw Nolan and David he flashed them his quick smile.

"Say what you will," he observed, "there are certain advantages to Philadelphia. The good Quakers may feel impelled to look after the morals of the people, but they make up for it in part by looking after their noses as well."

"Quite," agreed Nolan smiling. "Now if we could persuade the Cabildo to give some attention to our noses—"

"Let be, let be!" said Mr. Drew a little testily. "If they begin with our noses they'll end up by governing our morals as well, and they restrict us enough as it is in our business life—always some new tariff or injunction."

"The government seems to fear the smell of liberty on the northern breeze," reflected Nolan. His eye kindled humorously. "Perhaps that is why they placed the market north of the town."

Drew favored the quip with a mechanical smile as he looked cautiously around.

"There is a rumor abroad," he said, "that Colonel Megarrity left for New Madrid Friday to investigate a report that a General Collot has been sent by the French minister in Philadelphia to preach sedition in Upper Louisiana and that the sans culottes of St. Louis are only waiting for his arrival to stage a revolt."

Nolan snorted. "Revolt among the Creoles!" he scoffed. "Why, they couldn't leave their quadroon women long enough to load a rifle, let alone carry out a campaign."

An impudent face peered from a doorway, then came out, followed by a short, squatty body, and bulbous, stockinged legs. The man walked across the street and bowed to Nolan and Drew.

"A cood day to vous, m'sieurs," said he. "I trus' zat vous find my suits fitting."

"Splendid fit, M'sieu Lampasion," said Nolan, extending his arms and pirouetting for inspection. "I couldn't have done better myself."

"Et vous, m'sieu?" said the tailor to the older man.

Drew nodded and smiled. The tailor turned to David and touched his hunting shirt.

"Per'aps m'sieu would care to be measure' for ze new

suit," he wheedled with an expression in his pig eyes that was doubtless intended to be ingratiating but that succeeded only in being more impudent.

Drew looked sidewise at David's apparel. "M'sieu Lampasion is without doubt the best tailor in New Orleans," he hinted.

"Per'aps a suit like M'sieu Nolan," urged the tailor.

David hesitated for a moment. "Very well," he said, "let's see what you have in the way of suiting."

M'sieu Lampasion led the way to his shop, wringing his hands with ecstasy. The honor, he protested, was more than he deserved, yet he would endeavor to be worthy of it. He, Jean Lampasion, would be the envy of every tailor in Nouvelle Orleans, and he, M'sieu—w'at you zay it?—M'sieu Braddee would be the envy of every toff in Louisiana. Something in the English style, now, like M'sieu Nolan's, would be becoming on m'sieu. He pointed to a print on the wall of his shop while he tugged at a bolt of cloth. Nankeen would be suitable for the warm weather, he opined. No? M'sieu was like the other American gentlemen—he preferred wool, whatever the season. He produced a bolt of blue. Not too hot, not too cool, and it would wear like a—w'at you zay it?—a peeg's snout.

Nolan and Drew felt the cloth and nodded with the air of connoisseurs.

"What is the price, Jean?" inquired Nolan.

M'sieu Lampasion shot David a swift glance. "My price ees thirty dollaire," he began, then at sight of Nolan's threatening countenance added quickly, "but to M'sieu Nolan's frien' I mague it twenty."

"It's a fair enough price," assented Nolan, and Drew nodded assent.

"All right," said David. "Measure me."

He stripped off his hunting shirt and mounted the tailor's block.

"When can you have it ready?"

"Eef m'sieu will come every day at this time I have it Wednesday," said Lampasion.

Drew tucked his cane under his arm and produced a gold snuff box on the lid of which a pink shepherd and his pinker shepherdess were engaged in the penultimate stage of dalliance. He tapped the lid of the box elegantly, opened it, and presented it in turn to Nolan and David, then sniffed at a pinch himself.

"If you gentlemen will excuse me," he said, "I shall be on my way. I left word that I would be at 'Terheyden' for dinner."

When he was gone David twisted his chin over his shoulder.

"What is 'Terheyden'?" he asked Nolan.

"What is 'Terheyden'?" echoed Nolan, while Lampasion blinked reproachfully. "Do you mean to tell me that you've been in New Orleans and don't know what 'Terheyden' is?"

"Well, what is it?"

"It's the most magnificent country seat in Louisiana," said Nolan. "Set in the midst of a hundred acres of palms, and oranges, fish ponds, and Italian gardens. The pillars of the portico are a mile high and every room is an acre or more in extent. The furniture alone is worth a king's ransom. None of your bare floors and uncurtained windows such as the gentry have here in New Orleans, but rugs and hangings that must have come from a nabob's palace."

"Where is this wonderful place?" asked David.

"On the bayou, a couple of miles from the city."

"And it belongs to Mr. Drew?"

"Lock, stock, and barrel."

"I'd like to see it sometime."

"So would the governor, and Colonel Megarrity, and all the big chiefs. That is—more of it. Drew is pretty choosy of the company he invites and he can afford to be. The food is beyond cavil the best in Louisiana, and the service and the music is not far behind. And then—if he chooses to be gracious—a special deck of cards is produced and dealt to the guests—. But why should I spoil it for you if you ever should be invited? I'll just say that the flesh conquers the spirit, and very pleasantly, too."

* * * * *

David put on a new muslin shirt with ruffled bands and lawn neckcloth, his new blue suit, and a pair of shining black boots with fancy stitching, then went to look at himself in Madame Lala's mirror. Not at all bad, he decided, thinking of the sturdy, plainly cut snuff-brown suit that Lawyer Brackenridge had once bought for him. Pittsburgh seemed farther away now than the two thousand miles he had come by river. Indeed, he thought, as he looked out across the level, rain-soaked truck gardens with their palmetto and wild orange hedges and the cypress and live oak trees in the distance, Pittsburgh might well be on another planet. He looked back in the mirror but forgot himself in a twinge of nostalgia to be back in Pittsburgh dressed in the snuff-brown suit and sitting down to a meal that was seasoned by the repartee of Sabina and her spouse.

"Well, well, well," came the voice of Nolan behind him. "A veritable Prince Charming, by Jupiter. A regalia like this calls for attendance at the ball tonight."

David was conscious that he had been staring moodily at his reflection in the glass without seeing it. He tried to straighten his countenance as he swung around.

"I'm afraid I don't know the quadrille as they dance it here," he said.

"What's the difference? You can look on. Or perhaps we can find some charming Creole to teach you."

"She'll have to speak English."

"I have it! We'll ask Marguerite and Madame to go."

"What you might call earning your passage," smiled David.

"Well, you wanted someone who spoke English."

"If you can call what they speak English. It's about like Madame's American cooking."

But the two were easy to entice. Telemache was summoned with his violin and David was drilled in the elements of the quadrille until it was time to lay the dishes for supper. That evening Madame Lala arranged a circle of candles on the floor and Marguerite pirouetted slowly in her dainty lawn gown while Mama and Papa Lala, David, Nolan, and anyone else who cared to, looked on and made suggestions. The rain had stopped but the ground outside was a sea of mud and David was privately worried about how they were going to get Marguerite and Madame Lala dry-shod to the ball.

When the time came for departure, however, the two women calmly removed their shoes and stockings and sallied forth bare-footed, holding to Nolan's and David's arms for support through the slippery mud while Telemache carried a lantern that cast a dim light on their path. They followed the levee to the Place d'Armes, then slipped down its muddy sides to the barracks which served as the ballroom for New Orleans. In the light of the whale oil lamp hung over a balcony above the door several bare-footed women and girls with much chatter and laughter were laving their feet in pools of rain water while negro servants stood by to aid them in putting on their shoes and

stockings. David performed a like service for Madame, and Nolan for Marguerite, and the latter shrieked coquettishly as her escort took his compensation in a sly pinch of her calf.

The ballroom was a bare, elongated hall on the first floor of the barracks, which in New Orleans really meant the second. There were tiers of boxes at the sides where the mamas and the wallflowers sat and did needlework. Below them at the edge of the floor were chairs and benches where the ladies sat between dances and there was space between them for the standees. A few lamps bracketed to the walls or suspended from the rafters shed a poor light.

In contrast to the drabness of the hall were the gay head-dresses and fluffy gowns of the women and the velvet and silk coats of the men. The men strutted and bowed like marabouts and the women hid their faces coquettishly behind amorously painted fans, and a gentle buzzing drone rose to the rafters as if a hive of brilliantly colored bees were swarming. The women, with their pointed chins and even more pointed noses, were not the beauties that he had been led to expect, and some of the dandies mincing in silk stockings looked neither manly nor gallant. There was a preliminary twanging of strings from the musicians' raised platform at one side of the hall and the couples hastened to their stations, then the gypsy orchestra began playing the first quadrille.

David began the dance with Madame Lala and was absorbed in watching his steps when a flame-red dress swirled before him. He looked up into Arcola de Cavallini's eyes. He faltered momentarily, then recovered. Their hands met for an instant and the odor of jasmine seemed to envelop him. Then she was gone and another woman was before him.

The music stopped and David's eyes sought Arcola. He

marveled that he had not seen her at the first, for she stood out like a poppy in a field of daisies, with her red gown low off the shoulders and her hair piled on top of her head with a jewelled comb thrust in the back. The perfect Spanish beauty, thought David with a quickening of the pulse, though he knew that she had no Spanish blood in her veins.

For the first time David noted her partner. He was a tall, thin fellow in his early twenties, who might have been Spanish but whose arrogance was of a piece with no particular nation. Marguerite and Nolan appeared at David's side. Nolan followed the direction of his gaze.

"Ma'mselle Arcola de Cavalini," he explained, "and Patrick Megarrity, Colonel Megarrity's son."

"Strange those two should be together," reflected David aloud.

"Then you know about her and Colonel Megarrity?" said Nolan.

"I've heard of the circumstances."

"Well, then, there are those who say that the son aspires to be a rival of the father."

David grinned. "I suppose we'll hear of a duel some day in which the two rid the world of each other."

"Not a bad idea," smiled Nolan. "Shall I introduce you to her? I warn you it may be dangerous."

"Does she speak English?" asked David.

"Perfectly. She was born and brought up in Philadelphia."

"Then by all means, let's get acquainted," answered David.

David danced the second quadrille with Marguerite, then she was claimed by a young Creole. Philip Nolan was bearing down upon him with Arcola on his arm.

"Ma'mselle," said Nolan, "may I present Mr. David

Braddee, a recent comer to New Orleans? Mr. Braddee—Ma'mselle de Cavalini."

David bowed and Arcola curtsied as if they had never seen each other before. "I remember with pleasure touching your hand in the dance," said David.

"Indeed!" said Arcola, opening her fan and stifling a yawn behind a brilliant pastoral scene. "Do you like New Orleans, Mr. Braddee?"

"It is very different from Pittsburgh," said David.

"Oh, you are from Pittsburgh! I remember being there." She made a moué. "The coal smoke—it was terrible. I do not feel clean yet."

David looked crestfallen. "Yes," he said, "people who once see Pittsburgh seem never to forget it."

There was the sound of scraping violins from the orchestra stand. David held out his hand.

"May I have this quadrille?" he said. "I am new to the dance, but perhaps with your help—"

Loud voices rose from the vicinity of the orchestra and David looked across and saw young Megarrity arguing heatedly with the French master of ceremonies. Men were gathering about the disputants and fingering their sword canes when suddenly a piquant Creole girl in a yellow dress sprang on a chair and began haranguing them. Arcola was listening with interest.

"It seems," she explained, "that Señor Megarrity prefers the English quadrille to the French. The girl is making some very good puns. Too bad they can't be translated. See, everyone is laughing, even the sulky señor. I think we shall have a French quadrille."

The girl stepped lightly from her chair and the couples lined up for the dance with young Megarrity beside the little orator. But the quadrille was scarcely over before Megarrity took up the dispute again. The French Creole

men pressed forward and faced the Spaniards who had rallied around Megarrity. Women shrieked, half from excitement, and scrambled for the safety of the boxes.

Nolan appeared from the back of the crowd. "I think we'd better get out of here," he said. "I'll take care of Marguerite and Madame."

David turned to Arcola. "May I see you home?"

"My gallant seems to be otherwise engaged," she said. "Perhaps you had better. My cloak is over the rail of the box nearest the entry."

A number of women were crowding toward the head of the stairway under the escort of Americans, who apparently considered the fight purely a Creole affair. David found Arcola's cloak and threw it over her shoulders while they joined the press. When they reached the street a colored girl appeared with a lantern from the cellar where the servants waited during the ball. Arcola said something to the girl in French and she stooped and helped her mistress remove her shoes and stockings, then carried the lantern ahead of them while David and Arcola crossed the street.

"I came in Señor Megarrity's chaise," said Arcola. "You don't happen to have one concealed about you?"

Before David could answer a man appeared on the balcony and made an announcement in French.

"He says the difficulty is over and begs us to return," translated Arcola.

"You can ride in the chaise yet," said David.

Arcola looked at him in the half light for a long moment. "Why are you in New Orleans?" she asked with apparent irrelevance.

"I have given myself many reasons," answered David. "I think there is only one."

"You did not marry?"

"No."

She touched his coat with a gesture that seemed to be an appeal. "New Orleans is not like Pittsburgh or Louisville," she said. "I used to think Americans so brutal and direct. Now I know there are worse things—a dagger in the back, a shot in the dark. Sometimes, perhaps, the chances are equal."

"If you are trying to frighten me," said David slowly, "you should know that I don't frighten easily."

She motioned to the negro girl. "Allez, Georgette-Simone." David offered Arcola his arm and her hand tightened on his sleeve. "I live alone in a little house near the southern ramparts," she said.

Chapter 53

THE MONTH OF APRIL SLIPPED BY SWIFTLY. ALMOST AS stealthily, too, as David's comings and goings during the long, calm nights to and from the little house on Bienville Street. It seemed to him then and it seemed to him later that he went through that spring in New Orleans like a man who had been drugged. Persons and events seemed to blur as creatures in a dream. Each evening, soon after nightfall, he crept through a gap in the thorny wild orange hedge that surrounded the garden at the end of Arcola's cottage. The garden had oyster shell walks with brick borders and there were grassy strips between the walks and the flower beds. David's woods-wise footsteps on the grassy borders were as silent as the falling dew. Sometimes Arcola was sitting on a rustic bench under the orange tree in a shadow so dense that even when the moon was out he could not always be sure she was there until he reached the edge of the shadow or unless she was wearing a white dress. If the moon was in the sky, there was always the song of the mockingbird that nested in a neighboring garden to lend the final keen touch of ecstasy.

Sometimes he was aware of Arcola by the faint scent of jasmine that came to him out of the night; then he would stand, as silent as the shadows of the garden, breathing the enchanted air, savoring the moment as the epicure rolls fine old wine under his tongue. These were the delirious moments of living that he had sought since his release from prison. All the elements were there for the debauch of awareness his soul craved—the caressing loveliness of the

night and the garden and the song of the mockingbird, the jasmine scented assurance that Venus waited in her bower, and the spice of danger that gave the liaison the crowning fillip of perfection. Then presently, moving as in a strangely poignant dream, he would leave the shadows, cross the narrow strip of moonlight, and stoop into the shelter of the orange tree and Arcola de Cavalini's arms. It was not until he missed Arcola from under the orange tree one night that he knew that the jasmine odor came from a vine that trailed over a trellis in the next garden and not from the scent in her hair.

David never saw either the garden or the cottage by day. The nights alone were his. When they went indoors because of the lateness of the hour or the troublesomeness of the mosquitoes Arcola carefully locked the shutters and lit a single candle. He could see the fireplace where she and the freed girl, Georgette-Simone, did their cooking, the burnished copperware on walls and mantel, the quaint Breton cupboard, and the heavy oak table with its checked cloth. In one corner hung the crucifix and under it stood the prie-dieu with the little red cushion on which she knelt while at her devotions.

"My lady of the jessamines," he called her in those first delirious weeks. It was as far as he got in his efforts to describe her, but it had, he reflected, all the nuances of meaning that the liaison bore to him—her sweetness, her graciousness, the exotic passion of their nights together. When she disrobed in the moonlight it seemed to him that no woman could have been more beautiful. Her sweetly curving thighs; the twinkling navel of her flat stomach; her breasts, firm and rounded as inverted bowls, with nipples pointing defiantly ahead; her dusky, scented hair thrown back upon gleaming shoulders; all these made her

as desirable as an Egyptian queen. With such a woman he could have rivalled Casanova.

The last days of April were given over to dismal rains such as not even the oldest inhabitant remembered at that season. Gradually David became aware that he was undergoing a change in his attitude toward Arcola. At first he laid it on the rain and the steaming heat, then unreasonably he began to blame the crucifix. Nightly the crucified Christ hanging over the prie-dieu seemed to remind him of the time when he had lived not for the flesh but for the spirit. Finally he reached the point where he would always sit with his back to the crucifix, but still, even when the candle was extinguished, its eyes seemed to bore through his back, especially during the periods of dalliance that came as unfailingly as the night. Even in the darkness of Arcola's chamber the thought of the crucifix haunted him and seemed to make him less of a man.

A subtle change had overtaken Arcola as well. From the first she had been more mature than the girl he had left in Louisville; more silent and sad, also, than she had ever been, even with him. There had been times when he found it difficult to believe that this was the same nineteen-year-old girl he had known seven months before. Sometimes he wondered if Megarritty was the cause of the change, and once he asked her how *he* treated her.

"Oh, as well as can be expected," she had replied indifferently. "He says he will marry me when he is ready to go back to Spain."

But there was something more gone now from the first clean ecstasy. There were times when she seemed to forget him entirely and would lie with brooding eyes fixed upon the ceiling, apparently listening to the gloomy patter of the rain; then suddenly she would rouse to a whirlwind of frenzied passion that emptied him of life and left him spent

and shaken, with the kind of terror he had felt with the mulatto girls that night in the Catalan cabaret by the market. She seemed to be like a person living in fear of death and desperately wringing from life its last drop of awareness.

Subtly at first, then more rapidly as the first days of May passed, David felt the terror stealing over him. For the first time since childhood he found himself contemplating death with fear, and the contemplation bred in him a renewal of his old sullen irritability. His fierce joy in awareness was draining from him little by little and he felt as if the bones had left his body, and he was hollow and empty save for the fears and regrets that rattled inside him like seeds in a dried gourd.

But through it all they kept up the pretense that nothing had changed. The stealthy routine, that had assumed the aspect of the normal, went on. Always they were up and dressed before dawn. David would leave by the back hedge and presently Arcola would depart for the market to buy food for the day. By the time she had returned, Georgette-Simone would have emerged from her lean-to behind the house and built the fire. Sometimes in the afternoon or evening Patrick Megarrity would call, importunate for her favors, and sometimes she could check his advances only by calling up his healthy fear of his father.

David had taken a room in the city and usually he went there in the morning for a few hours of sleep. After that he went for a walk, often outside the ramparts. The rain had passed by now, but steaming vapors clung to the swamps and the river until noon and the citizens went about the city on their morning errands in an uncanny, foreboding shroud of mist. David formed the habit of stopping daily at Lala's for tea and a chat with Nolan. He and Nolan sometimes had supper at a cafe and then went to a ball or to the

theater. Though David was beginning to understand a little French and Nolan translated enough of the words to keep him informed as to the progress of the drama, he found his chief interest in the actors' grimaces and mincing artificialities. He had a profound distaste for them, but he watched with a fascination that disgusted him. Still, it was something to do, something to take his mind from his eternal brooding.

The *Comédie*, as the theater was called, was a long, narrow hall with shabby paper on the walls and a torn curtain before the stage. There were small boxes along the side for the gentry and at the back under the negro gallery were two large boxes, one of them reserved for the governor, and the other reserved for Americans, either as a mark of Creole courtesy or as a mark of Creole distaste for American company. On a certain evening about the first of May, David and Nolan sat together in the American box. Terheyden Drew was present on one of his rare evenings in town, and there was another American who Nolan introduced as Poling Sanders.

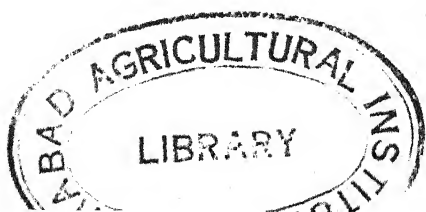
"Strange," observed Nolan at intermission, "Drew and Sanders both being here tonight."

"What is so strange in that?" asked David.

"Why, the two men are mortal enemies. Drew has made his fortune by honest trading in cotton, tobacco, lumber, and groceries, while the most of Sanders' money comes from the slave trade. Sanders hates him because Drew looks down on him."

David smiled at the incongruity of Drew with his death's head being snobbish toward anyone else.

"Sanders' enmity is bad enough," continued Nolan, "but there are rumors of an alliance between him and Colonel Megarrity to ruin Drew."



"Why Megarrity?" demanded David with whetted interest.

"Under the last governor," replied Nolan, "Drew was the most influential merchant in New Orleans, and rightly or not Megarrity thinks that it was Drew who prevented his elevation to the governorship."

"I see," said David thoughtfully.

"Megarrity, at any rate," supplemented Nolan, "has acquired a tremendous influence over Carondelet. He has even added the assessorship to his colonelcy. That's about the same as an American state's attorneyship."

"That means he prosecutes crime and punishes it," reflected David. "Who judges?"

"The alcaldes, but they rarely act against the advice of the assessor. And as I said, Megarrity has the governor sewed up. But the interesting thing is to watch Sanders and Megarrity. One of Drew's ships was seized at Havana two weeks ago on a charge of customs irregularities. During the last two years he has lost three ships and their cargoes to French pirates that appeared suddenly at the mouth of the river just when they could do the most damage. The Spanish guardacostas had declared the coast free."

Arcola entered her box with the persistent Patrick Megarrity close at her side. Nolan spied her as soon as she appeared.

"There is our friend, Ma'mselle de Cavalini," he pointed out. "The same flame-red gown she wore at the ball. It becomes her mightily."

David assented.

"Have you seen her since the night of the ball where Senor Megarrity made such a spectacle of himself?" pursued Nolan.

"No," lied David.

"Well, you sly dog, I met her last night at the ball and

she admitted that you had taken her home in place of the delinquent Megarrity. She asked if you had gone back to the smoky place—couldn't seem to remember its name."

"Perhaps," said David, "if I knew when she was going to a ball I might make it a point to attend."

"Well, you're wise to stay away from her, my lad. She's gunpowder to fool around with."

Drew and Sanders entered. "Arm in arm, like old chums," commented Nolan sotto voce. "I wouldn't want anything to do with the other one if I were either of them. Sanders is a snake and Drew is a fish."

"I rather think you're mistaken about Drew," commented David. "With that face he must suffer the tortures of the damned. He must be thinking of it constantly when he meets people. That would be enough to explain his seeming coldness."

Nolan looked at him in surprise. "Now I claim to be a fairly observant chap," he said, "but I never thought of that. It helps to explain his peculiarities, too. His passion for symmetry, in particular."

"He has to make it up to himself in some way," said David. "No woman could possibly love him."

Nolan chuckled. "Perhaps not," he said, "but he has four of the handsomest octoroon fillies that ever graced a four-poster. And would you believe it, there is a red-head, a brown-head, a blonde, and a brunette?"

"More of his passion for symmetry," said David drily.

That night Arcola's abstraction seemed to deepen into a trance. In spite of his relief at the release, David's pride was piqued and he flared up irritably.

"I'll go if you're tired of me," he said.

There was no reply, but suddenly David became aware that the girl was shaking. He raised himself on his elbow and saw in the moonlight that her eyes and cheeks were

bright with tears. At the sight remorse overtook him, yet, since he could not bring himself to acknowledge it, his irritation increased.

"What are you crying about?" he demanded harshly.

Her eyes turned slowly toward him. "Doesn't it ever occur to you," she said, "that this can't go on forever?"

David stared back at her. If only he could bring himself to say that he was sorry for his words. Instead of that his answer was another question; "How long should *he* be away?"

"Maybe six, maybe eight weeks."

"Well, he's only been gone five weeks."

"David, we'll have to face it. The longer we stay here the less chance we'll have of getting away."

"Perhaps I like it here," returned David with conscious insolence toward the absent Megarrity.

"But you can't do anything against him. He's the most powerful man in Louisiana—not excepting Governor Carondelet. We've got to leave."

"I couldn't stay in one place, Arcola. I can't be house-broken like a dog."

"Then we'll move around, David. I'll go wherever you say."

David wavered for a moment. "It's easy enough for me to go, but with you—where would we go and how?"

"We could take ship to Philadelphia."

"Philadelphia!" he exclaimed bitterly. "Why did you have to say Philadelphia? Don't ever bring up that place to me again."

He refused to discuss the matter further and she gave up with a sigh, though she did not fail during the succeeding nights to plead with him again and again to save himself from Megarrity by leaving. Strangely enough, David had

the grace to spare her the accusation of wishing to get rid of him because she preferred Megarrity.

Being a woman Arcola knew that he was concealing something from her, and being a woman she suspected that another woman was at the bottom of the trouble. She often wondered who was the woman that he had intended to marry, but she knew better than to ask. Such a question, she felt, would snap the slender thread that was all that bound them together.

For she was painfully conscious by now that David had not grown to love her. He had never been a good liar, and now that the first ecstasy of their coming together had gone she read in him that before long he would be leaving her. It never occurred to her that it was fear of Megarrity that would drive him away; it was even conceivable that David would wait around New Orleans to give the colonel satisfaction in case any rumor of the liaison had leaked out.

No, he would be leaving because of that tragedy he never mentioned, perhaps the stigma of his imprisonment, perhaps his disappointment over the loss of the other woman, perhaps merely because of the yearning soul of the borderer that forever sought new balm in other faces, other perils, other solitudes. Sooner or later the moment would come. Some evening he might fail to appear, or she might awake and find him gone. Whatever happened, she firmly resolved, she would love him enough to let him go. Perhaps then, some day when his soul had found rest, he would return to be with her always.

The mists were gone now and each day came up clear and stagnant, hot as an oven in the sun and chilling cold in the shade. Clouds of mosquitoes rose from the swamps and winged their way into the town through the suffocating nights. The heavy, scented dampness of those nights weighed on David's stomach like an anvil. Hour after hour

he would lie staring up at the faintly illuminated web of the mosquito bar. A vague sense of danger seemed to him to pervade the city like a miasma; then again it was a beautiful, triangular-headed snake lying under a haw bush with a reptilian stare of patient waiting. And David waited for the nameless something to enter the paneless window and crush him in its slimy folds. Once it occurred to him that it was the graceful Creoles' hatred of the crude Americans, but he put that aside. It was possible for Americans to be accepted—as Philip Nolan and Poling Sanders had been. It was something deeper, more subtle, immeasurably more menacing.

And then one night it came upon him that the trouble lay within himself. He possessed a disharmony with the grace, the gayety, the ease, and the do-lessness of the Latins. He was not conscious of criticizing them for being as they were, yet he felt a Calvinistic distaste for living among them. He needed the bracing air of the north, the vigor, the activity, the purposefulness that he had left behind.

Arcola heard him rise quietly and grope for his clothes on the chair by the bed, then go into the other room. The moment had come and she steeled herself to go through with it. Her heart pounded with a force that seemed to shake the bed and marked with a despairing rhythm the passing of their last moments together. The suffocating night had become chill and she sat up with the tears running down her cheeks and drew the sheet up over her naked body. Save for the pounding of her heart she felt like a corpse in a winding sheet. It came to her that perhaps if he saw her lying there without the sheet—but no, there had been enough of that. It was his love she wanted now. She clenched her hands under the sheet and closed her eyes. Never before, she knew, had she felt the true measure of the love she bore him, and now he would never know it.

David stood fully clothed beside the bed looking down where a broad moonbeam fell upon Arcola's tumbled dark hair and pale face; there were shining streaks on her face as if she had cried herself to sleep. He felt guilty because of the desperation with which she had pled with him to go away with her, because of the clinging tenderness and frenzied passion of her embraces, but no woman—no human being—had the right to hamper a man that way.

He lifted the bar and bent over her, then tiptoed from the room. His lips were moist with the salt of her tears and he felt vaguely that her lips had stirred under his.

Arcola sat up and threw the sheet from her. She folded her arms under the roundness of her breasts and looked down at the treasures that had made her beloved of many. Four years it had been since her mother's death, four years of hollow laughter and simulated passion. The memory of it haunted her like a nightmare. Why had she never left it for a home and respectability as she could often have done? The answer mocked her now with a brutality that chilled her blood with despair. She had been waiting for the one love that had never been yielded to her, for the one love that could not be bought with the only coin she had to offer.

She threw a robe about her and went into the other room. On the prie-dieu by the bedroom door there lay a white square that had not been there a few hours before. With trembling fingers she struck steel on flint and lit a candle, then carried the light to the prie-dieu. The note had been written in the darkness with straggling lines and uncertain characters, then placed on the prie-dieu as a sort of last pious offering.

"I have tried, Arcola," read the note, "to love you, but always I seem to love myself more. Something inside me is to blame for this, something that always makes me move

on. I am afraid that I am a damned soul. Remember me here, sometimes, in your prayers. And you, may your prayers for yourself always be answered. D."

It was the closest thing to a prayer David had ever uttered in his life, and as if she sensed its significance the girl dropped to her knees on the red velvet cushion and lifted her eyes to the crucifix.

Chapter 54

WHEN DAVID AWOKE IN HIS LITTLE ROOM ON THE RUE Royale, Philip Nolan was sitting by the window with his elbows on the sill looking moodily into the street. David studied him for a moment. The young Irishman seemed decidedly downcast about something.

"Hello," said David. "Have you lost your last friend?"

Nolan jumped. "Well, not yet," he admitted, "but I may any moment."

"What's the matter?"

"Suppose you get dressed," countered Nolan, "and come out to the Cafe de la Place d'Armes. I have something to say to you that I can utter with more heart over a bowl of gumbo."

It was past noon when they went out and the air seemed to lie about them in a stagnant pool. The heat of the sun burned through their clothes and they sought the narrow strip of shade across the street. Suddenly, as they passed into the shade, the heat departed and they seemed to be moving in still, clear coolness. Nolan moved his shoulders inside his loose linen coat.

"It's unnatural," he said, "this blasted heat and cold. I heard a Creole sailor from the islands say yesterday that it was yellow fever weather."

"This early in the season?" queried David.

"Does seem strange," assented Nolan, "but they say it sometimes comes as early as May. The medicos don't seem to know a great deal about its habits and haunts. It simply comes and goes as it pleases."

"Have you ever seen a case?"

"Yes, once. In Galvez Town. It's strange that the disease should be called yellow fever, because only a fraction of the people that take it ever turn yellow. The Spanish name is more accurate."

"What's that?"

"*Vómito negro*, from the granulated blood, like coffee grounds, that the patient vomits. Sometimes it is the first sign that a person has the fever and sometimes it is the last. I've even heard that some never had the black vomit at all, but died just the same."

"I've heard of the black vomit. Is it true that after it comes there is no hope of recovery?"

"I don't know," answered Nolan. "I met a Spanish soldier in Texas who claimed to have had the black vomit for three days in Vera Cruz, yet had recovered. I'll tell you, I didn't stay in Galvez Town to study the disease but got out as fast as I could. And so did nearly everybody else. Yellow fever will empty a town quicker'n you can say Jack Robinson of everyone with the means to leave, and the poor folks left behind huddle together with garlic on their breath and the smoke of burning tar pots in their eyes waiting to see who the disease will hit next. And when it does strike, how they scatter to get away from the infected person, though it be the closest blood relation."

They turned into the cafe and sat down at a small table by the window. A gaunt young Catalan in a red and gold sash rose and sauntered out. The proprietor brought them steaming bowls of gumbo and they began eating.

"What was it you wanted to discuss over the gumbo?" said David.

"I am leaving tomorrow for Natchez," said Nolan. "From there I may go back to Texas. Why don't you go with me?"

"Agreed," said David. "You didn't need to make such a mystery of that."

Nolan looked at him with a flicker of relief. "I didn't think it would be that simple," he said.

"Why not?"

"Well—" Nolan decided not to go on.

"Out with it, man," said David. "There's some reason for all this mystery."

"Well, if you must know, I thought you might be having too good a time."

David looked at the Irishman with dawning comprehension. "I think I see," he said.

"Did you think," Nolan went on, "that the whole town wouldn't know of your affair? New Orleans is just like a small town—everyone who matters knows the business of everyone else who matters."

"You overrate me," said David with a sardonic inflection.

Nolan was brutally direct. "It is Ma'mselle de Cavalini who matters. After all she is Colonel Megarrity's mistress."

David pondered for a moment. "Perhaps I should tell you," he said finally, "that I have known her for years. I think it was to find her that I came to New Orleans."

Nolan studied his friend silently for a moment. "If you love her," he said presently, "then take her and leave the city at once. There will be hell to pay when the colonel returns, and even now that whippersnapper of a son of his is threatening to call you out."

"How long has this—our affair been known?"

"I don't know. I only learned of it this morning. I came to you directly."

"And that is why you have suddenly decided to go to Texas?"

"No—not exactly. I would have started in a few days anyhow, but there is a party leaving for Natchez tomorrow

and it is always well to have company in the wilderness. But if you're going to take her it's obviously impossible for you to go to Texas. I have it! The 'Micajah Stratton' leaves for Philadelphia in a week. I can arrange to stow you both away on it. All we've got to do is pray that Colonel Megarrity doesn't get back in time."

"I think it would be better for me to go to Texas with you," said David slowly. "We—well, we quarreled. It is all over between us."

Nolan looked his relief, then the gloom closed in again. "That much is to the good," he said, "but you still have the Megarritys to contend with. Patrick is a young fool who may give you a chance to shoot back at him, but there is no such nonsense about the colonel. He'll clap you in the Cabildo, and in a week or so it'll be known that you died of prison fever or were shot while trying to escape. If I were you I would lose no time in seeing the governor's secretary and asking for a passport."

"If the colonel is so mighty in these parts," said David, "what makes you think I can get a passport?"

"Because the governor's secretary is a pet enemy of his," explained Nolan. "He'll be glad of a chance to do the colonel a dirty turn."

The gaunt Catalan in the red and gold sash strolled by the window, then turned and made a signal to someone farther down the street.

"That's the fellow that left here as we entered," said Nolan suddenly. "I wonder what he's up to. Oh, oh! The jig's up. Here come Patrick Megarrity and two of his cronies. It's a trap, Dave. Whatever you do, refuse to be insulted unless you're willing to abide by the consequences."

Patrick Megarrity blustered into the cafe and strode to the table where David and Nolan sat. David was in the corner next to the wall and Nolan was on the outside.

Patrick Megarrity glowered at David and said something in rapid Spanish that ended on a snarling note, like an angry cat. That was too much for David, and he laughed in the man's face. The old delight in combat was surging over him again and he felt that nothing could give him quite as much pleasure as to wipe up the street with the popinjay.

"What did he say, Phil?" queried David.

"He says," translated Nolan, "that in the absence of his father he takes it upon himself to defend the old man's honor. He challenges you to a duel."

"Sure, I'll fight him," said David, winking at Nolan.

One of Megarrity's companions stepped forward. There was a rapid fire of Spanish between him and Nolan, then Nolan turned back to David.

"What weapons do you choose?"

"Baked yams at twenty paces," grinned David.

"That will be the worst insult you can offer him," warned Nolan.

"Tell him."

Megarrity almost exploded with wrath. David had never before appreciated the riches of the Spanish language and for a moment he felt a shade of regret that he had been born a tongue-tied Anglo-Saxon.

"Ask him if he ever heard of a gouge fight," said David presently. "Tell him the one that gouges out the most eyes in ten minutes wins the duel and saves the family silver-plate or whatever we're arguing about."

Young Megarrity's reply was a model of sulphurous overstatement concerning certain saints, fiends, and royal personages, and what David could immediately proceed to do with them. When the Spaniard had finally run down, Nolan cocked a quizzical eye at his friend.

"He demands pistols," said the Irishman.

"An admirable summary," commented David. "From the

time he took I thought he wanted to empty the Spanish royal arsenals."

"You're not far wrong at that," grinned Nolan. "Just substitute shyd-house for arsenal."

"Tell him only half-grown boys fight with pistols in Pennsylvania," said David. "If he wants to fight me he'll have to accept rifles."

There was a rapid exchange of Spanish and Nolan swung back. "He says you'd better take pistols. He's the best rifle shot in Louisiana."

"Well, tell him I'm the best rifle shot in Pennsylvania. I'll guarantee to clip his eyebrows at fifty paces."

"He accepts rifles," said Nolan presently.

"Suppose," said David, "that we start on parallel lines fifty yards apart, loading as we run, with one shot apiece that must be fired before we reach the end of our run."

"He'll never do it," said Nolan. "The Creole pot hunters are not American woodsmen."

"All right, then propose we enter opposite sides of a wood with one bullet apiece."

"That might work," said Nolan. He talked for some time with Megarrity's second, then turned back. "There is a small grove of live oaks on the other side of 'Terheyden,'" he said. "They propose tomorrow morning at dawn."

"Suits me," assented David.

He and Nolan left the cafe and walked across the Place. "If nothing goes wrong tomorrow morning," said Nolan, "we can still join the party bound for Natchez. Why don't you get your passport now? I'll go with you."

The matter was soon attended to, and David went to a shop to make some purchases, among them a broad leather money belt. It was not yet the middle of the afternoon when he presented himself in Terheyden Drew's office. The merchant sat like a gargoyle behind his desk with its

batteries of pens and pencils and its rectangles of papers neatly marshalled before him. David stated his business. The merchant leaned back and placed his finger tips precisely together.

"Yes," he said, "I think I can give you the rest of the cash and the draft I promised you."

He pulled out a drawer of his desk and took a handful of gold and silver coins from a black metal box. He ranged the coins on his desk in neat stacks.

"Ten joes," he said, "fifteen half-joes, and thirty silver dollars."

David began slipping the coins into his money belt. "About the first of February," said Mr. Drew, "I sent a keel-boat load of merchandise to Mr. Beaumont of Pittsburgh. Would a draft on him be satisfactory?"

"Of course," said David. "I know him well."

The merchant picked up a pen and wrote a draft for nine hundred dollars and sealed it with his ring. He drew his hand over his forehead wearily. The paper was worthless, he knew, but so was more than fifty thousand dollars worth of other paper that he had written in the last six weeks on St. Louis, New York, and Philadelphia. Sanders and Megarrity were closing in on him but there might be a way of cheating them yet; the alcaldes, at least, would have little to sequesterate. That would be the hardest blow to his enemies. The grimace on his face was intended to be a smile.

David buckled the money belt around his waist and buttoned his coat over it. Drew looked up at the straight figure and handsome features of the young man and his heart warmed toward him. It was just such a man that Terheyden Drew would have been, saving the damned smallpox and his tumble into the grate. He remembered how, as a little boy, the young ladies had carried him about in their arms

and kissed his curls; then had come that dark interval of weeks, and when he had gone into the daylight the same girls had fled from him in horror. Even his mother had come to hate him and wish him dead. And Terheyden Drew had never ceased to wish himself dead. He had known money and luxury, but these he would gladly have exchanged for the love of one woman—almost any woman. He had seen the terror in the eyes of his octoroons when they had first come to “Terheyden,” and he felt rather than knew that they still bore an aversion toward him. Except one—perhaps—

The merchant forced himself back from his dream. Well, there was at least one thing he could do for the young man who had just tucked the worthless draft into his money belt.

“I am planning on having a few friends at my house tonight,” he said. “Perhaps you and Mr. Nolan would care to stay at ‘Terheyden’ and begin your journey from there in the morning.”

Chapter 55

DAVID AND NOLAN RODE ALONG THE BAYOU ROAD EACH with the leading string of a packhorse in his hand. On their left was the stagnant green of the bayou with the live oaks in their funereal weeds bending over it like widows dropping their tears into its waters. On the right lay scattered plantation houses and a succession of cultivated fields of cotton and some of cane, for Louisiana was just beginning to grow the crop that was later to make it an important sugar refining center.

A quarter of a mile from the road on a low ridge appeared a huge square brick house, painted white and with great white pillars supporting its portico.

"Terheyden," said Nolan. He pointed beyond the house to a clump of live oaks on the ridge. "The woods where you meet Megarrity."

David had seen the plantation often in his solitary rambles but had never known its identity. Between the road and the house was a depression that had been a part of the bayou until the levee along which the road ran had been built. It was now a series of lawns, gardens, and pools set with exotic shrubs and trees, including bananas, dates, limes, and cocoanuts. The horsemen crossed a bridge near which were a water gate and a small house that gave partial shelter to a steam pump for draining the gardens and proceeded along a broad dyke that overlooked the gardens on one side. They rode between rows of half grown palm trees whose dry leaves crackled in the slight breeze like the patter of rain. As they approached the house the character of the

gardens changed; there was less lawn and more shrubbery, meticulously placed and pruned, and interspersed with marble statues and vine-covered kiosks. Nolan indicated a broad terrace set with cedars, yew, and box arranged with painful formality.

"They say that's an Italian garden," he said.

"I can't say I like it," commented David. "It's too—too stiff and formal."

"More of Drew's passion for symmetry," grinned Nolan.

The palm avenue gave way to orange trees which extended in a graceful curve past the house and to the white-washed negro cabins half a mile beyond. A few late blossoms scattered their perfume down across the gardens and enveloped the riders as they stopped at the end of the portico and two negro boys took the bridles of their horses. A middle-aged negro dressed as a butler came down the stairs from the portico and bowed formally.

"Welcome to 'Terheyden,' gentlemen," he said in good English. He motioned to a couple of negro boys to take their bags. "May I show you to your rooms? Mr. Drew returned from the city an hour ago and Mr. Sanders arrived just a few minutes ago."

Nolan glanced at the butler in surprise but said nothing more than "Thank you, Edmond. We would appreciate a chance to freshen up before dinner."

They were ushered through a spacious hall, in which was a large glass tank with submarine plants and a school of flashing golden carp, then up a magnificent curving stairway. The glimpses David caught of the furniture and draperies were enough to convince him that Nolan had not exaggerated the glories of 'Terheyden'; certainly he had never seen anywhere a house that could compare with it. On the second floor was a long hall with many doors and

Edmond opened one of these for Nolan and another for David.

The negro boys carried the bags into the rooms and left. David sat down on a Hepplewhite chair and looked around his bedroom with a kind of awe. It was a large room, perhaps twenty-five feet square, and it was furnished with mahogany washstand, dresser, highboy, secretary, closet, and canopied bed, all bearing a family resemblance to the straight-legged fluted chair in which he sat. There was even glass in the windows, a rare thing in Louisiana; the window and bed curtains were made of the same polka-dotted material, and the rug on the floor was a restrained symphony of Oriental colors.

David doffed his coat and shirt and washed, then dried himself on a cotton towel that hung by the washstand. Magnificence such as this, he decided, called for a clean shirt, so he fished his best one from his war bag and donned it. The ruffles were badly crumpled, but a clean neckcloth and the expanse of his waistcoat aided in concealing the difficulty. There was a tap at the door and Nolan entered.

"Did you hear Edmond say that Sanders is here?" he said. "I wonder what that can mean?"

"If I lived in such luxury as this," returned David, "I think I would entertain my enemies as often as I could. Nothing could make them as uncomfortable as the sight of my prosperity."

Nolan smiled and nodded. "I think you've hit the nail on the head," he said. "Are you ready to go down?"

Edmond was waiting at the bottom of the stairs. "Mr. Drew is with Mr. Sanders and the ladies on the terrace," he said. "He asks that you join them at your convenience."

On the portico David turned to Nolan. "Ladies?" he said. "I didn't bargain for that."

Nolan chuckled, and waved toward the terrace. David

looked down and saw two men and four young women sitting at one end of the Italian garden. Even at a distance he could see the lustre of the girls' hair in the evening sun.

"The octoroons?" he queried.

"Yes," answered Nolan. "They are the ladies of 'Terheyden,' and anyone who is entertained here is bound to accept them as such."

"That shouldn't be difficult," said David, "except for other women. I suppose that no white woman has ever been here as a guest."

"Not to my knowledge," replied Nolan.

They descended the stairs and walked toward the terrace. As they approached Drew and Sanders rose.

"I think you know Mr. Nolan," said Drew to the girls. "May I present Mr. Braddee? Ma'mselles Marie, Celeste, Aurelie, and Fleurade."

The girls curtsied in turn and offered their hands. David bent self-consciously over the slender jewelled hands with a sense of shock that such lovely fragile women as these were nothing more than chattels in the eyes of the law. They were all dressed in pastel gowns, cut low enough, as was then the mode, to expose frankly the roundness of their bosoms. Marie, the dark-haired girl, wore yellow; Celeste, the blonde, wore powder blue; Aurelie, the brown-haired girl, wore lavender; and red-haired Fleurade wore green. All four were surpassingly handsome women with no trace of their African ancestry save a slight duskiness of skin that was scarcely more than a peach bloom.

"Shall we walk?" suggested Drew, when the introductions were over, offering his arm to Marie. "Mr. Braddee may find the gardens of interest, and you other gentlemen may recognize some recent changes." He laughed self-deprecatingly. "Perhaps some day I may be willing to admit that the gardens have arrived at a state of perfection."

David found himself walking beside Celeste, who, as a recent arrival from San Domingo, spoke little English. David's conversation with her was necessarily limited to observations in broken French and monosyllabic English to which she invariably smiled divinely and answered "oui?" in a tone half between question and assent.

It was quickly evident, if evidence was needed, that Drew was passionately wrapped up in his gardens. For an hour the party moved from terrace to terrace, among parterres and fish ponds, and through shaded orange and lemon walks, pausing now to identify an exotic shrub or to hear about a European precedent for some peculiarly designed parterre or maze. Several times they stopped to rest on marble benches by a pool or in a shaded kiosk. Near the bayou road Drew paused and levelled his cane at the water gate.

"That gate," he observed, looking at Sanders with a significance that David was at a loss to interpret, "is all that makes this garden possible. If it breaks or is opened through some mischance the salt water from the bayou will cover the gardens up to the Italian terrace. The water could not be pumped out fast enough to save the shrubbery."

They turned and walked back toward the mansion with a red and gold sunset on their right over the oaks of the bayou. Dinner was served by Edmond and a liveried footman and it was the epicurean feast that Nolan had foretold. The table was a-glitter with porcelain, silver, and cut glass, and vases of flowers, and forests of candelabra made it almost impossible for David to more than glimpse anyone but Marie, who sat on his left next to Drew, and Fleurade, who sat on his right. Both girls spoke English—better than he did, David reflected—and they conversed with a well-bred ease and resourcefulness that put him to shame. Behind him in a little alcove a string quartet of liveried negroes

played softly on muted instruments, and when the company adjourned to the drawing room for coffee, panels between that room and the musicians' alcove were slid apart.

Presently the girls suggested a quadrille, and as if the wish of the ladies were law Drew gave Edmond orders to send the musicians to the ballroom on the third floor. Presently the party followed. The room was larger than the largest assembly room in Pittsburgh and the four couples circling on the polished floor seemed lost in its immensity. The girls danced with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes and it came to David that, shut off from society as they were, their lives must be oppressively monotonous, with few opportunities for such diversion.

After an hour of quadrilles they returned to the drawing room and played whist until the clock in the hall struck ten. Drew pushed back his chair.

"It is time that we retired," he said. "Mr. Nolan and Mr. Braddee must be on their way by daylight."

The company rose and the girls took their leave with deep curtsies from the doorway. Edmond appeared with a thin sheaf of playing cards in his hand. Drew motioned the gentlemen to a small table on which a silver candelabrum blazed with eight candles. Edmund shuffled the cards rapidly and laid one before each man. David turned up his card and blinked with surprise. He held the queen of hearts, yellow-haired and wearing a stiff yellow brocade gown. Then it came to him that this was what Nolan had meant by the flesh conquering the spirit. Mr. Drew was evidently feeling gracious tonight.

Terheyden Drew turned up his card and saw the black queen of spades. He cast a quick glance at Edmond, but the butler's face was as impassive as the one Drew held in his hand. This was the third time that he had found the black queen in his hand when he had entertained guests.

There was no chance about this. His heart pounded with sudden force under his ruffles. If his preference was clear enough for Edmond to see, perhaps she knew, too. Perhaps some day—but no, that would never be. He was not a man, just a wealthy and somewhat soft-hearted but hideously disfigured monster, and she—she was not a woman, but a beautiful chattel with glorious dark hair and a tender smile that tugged at his heart strings with an eternal reminder of the love he had never known.

* * * * *

A pistol shot sounded faintly through the morning mist. "There it is at last," said Nolan. He pointed the two pistols he held in his hands at the ground and fired them in succession.

"It's up to you now, Dave," he said. "I only wish I could be sure that damn' Megarrity would hold himself to one shot. I don't trust these whiskerandoes—I've found 'em too easy to bribe to feel that they wouldn't take a dirty advantage."

"I'll see to it that he fires first," said David. "There's not more than a hundred yards to go before we meet." He looked at his flint and priming, then covered the breech of his rifle with a cloth. "The thing that worries me most is whether I can keep my powder dry in this fog."

"Well, you'd better be going," said Nolan. He held out his hand. "Good hunting."

David smiled wryly as he wrung the Irishman's hand, then slipped quietly into the woods. He and Megarrity were supposed to be approaching each other from north and south, respectively, and he steered himself by the green moss at the butts of the trees. He wondered vaguely if Megarrity was woodsman enough to do the same and stopped to listen for the sound of his approach. The mist

swirled about him like something alive and the long tags of Spanish moss brushed softly against his hunting shirt. From the cypress swamp beyond the low ridge a solitary alligator bellowed defiance at the coming day, and overhead a few birds stirred sleepily.

David slipped behind an oak and stood for long minutes. He had covered his half of the distance and did not propose to blunder into the enemy's fire. The mist lifted perceptibly and he could see for fifty feet through the trees. A twig snapped on his right and David slid quietly around the tree and peered out. Yes, Megarrity was standing within his sight, blurred by the mist, but still a fair enough target. David removed the cover from "Old Katy" and raised the weapon slowly, then lowered it as Megarrity suddenly turned toward him. If he was not mistaken, he had been seen.

He gathered the loose skirt of his hunting shirt and thrust an edge of it from behind the oak. A bullet whizzed through the doeskin. David peered about the oak. Megarrity was nowhere to be seen. David hesitated for several precious seconds. He could rush the fellow and give him a bullet in the leg or arm—enough to chasten him—or he could fire into the air and call the duel quits. He peered about the tree again and another bullet plowed through his hair and stung his scalp.

David cursed himself for his delay and ran toward Megarrity before the Spaniard could reload. A dark figure fled before him into the mist and David whipped up his rifle and fired, too angry to care if he killed the fellow. Nolan and Megarrity's seconds were coming fast; to David's woods-wise ears it sounded as if a dozen men were crashing through the trees. Nolan was by his side.

"I was afraid of that," he cried, panting.

Several men appeared about the fallen Megarrity and

lifted him to a sitting posture. The wounded man lifted his hand and shrieked something in Spanish, then fell back dead. Nolan turned to David with horrified eyes.

"He says you fired twice."

"You don't believe it, do you?" said David numbly.

"No, of course not. But what chance have we against a dead man's word?"

Two men detached themselves from the group around Megarrity and walked swiftly toward David and Nolan. One of them was the governor's secretary and the other was a lieutenant of the Louisiana regiment.

"You heard the accusation?" said the lieutenant in English.

Nolan nodded. "But it is not true, Teniente Martin. My principal had only one bullet."

The lieutenant shrugged. "Señor Megarrity's friends would say the same of him."

"Megarrity's ramrod lies twenty feet behind him," observed David quietly. "See if his powder horn is unstopped."

The lieutenant shook his head. "I am sorry," he said. "My orders are to arrest you in any event." A squad of soldiers were surrounding them now and at a sign from the lieutenant they laid hands on David.

"Since when has dueling been a crime in Louisiana?" demanded Nolan angrily. He stopped suddenly as the light of comprehension dawned in his eyes. "Or are you arresting him for something else?" he added.

"My orders did not state the reason," said the lieutenant. "I am sorry."

"Well, we'll see about this when we get back to the city," said Nolan.

The governor's secretary spoke for the first time. "You are forbidden to return to the city, Señor Nolan," he said. "I am to accompany you to Fort St. John and see that you

cross the lake with your party. They are waiting there, yes? If you do not report to Don Manuel in Natchez within one week you will be banished forever from Louisiana and the Floridas. An express will leave Fort St. John at the same time you do with letters for Don Manuel and should arrive a couple of days before you."

"Well, that's that, Phil," said David. "There's nothing you can do for me, I'm afraid. You'd better go on."

"May I speak to my friend apart for a moment," begged Nolan.

The secretary hesitated. "These soldiers don't understand a word of English," put in the lieutenant. "We can stand aside."

It had scarcely occurred to David before or during the duel that he could lose his life; he had had a supreme confidence in his ability to take care of himself, especially with a weapon in his hands. Now his heart sank like a stone and he remembered the long nights of premonition that had kept him sleepless during recent weeks. He did not need to be told that he stood face to face with death; the long arm of Megarrity was effective even during the colonel's absence. Well, let death come if it must. Only he hated to think of it coming in this poisonous city; if only it could wait for him alone in the open spaces, in the woods, or on the trail. The claws of a she-bear or the tomahawk of an Indian would be a cleaner way out than the bullet or noose of the whiskerandoes.

The bitterness that he had nursed for so many months was suddenly gone, and the craving for freedom that had harried him through thousands of miles of wilderness. How terribly misspent his life had been since Philadelphia. If he could have only one minute with Starr before he died to tell her that and implore her forgiveness.

The secretary and the lieutenant were standing apart.

"I think I know what you are going to say," said David to Nolan. "The governor is holding me till Colonel Megarrity returns. There is no hope for me."

Nolan shook his head slowly. "None. Unless we can make a break for it now. Come on; it's worth the risk."

"It would be if I were the only one involved," said David, "but I can't allow you to do it. Besides, everything you possess is under the Spanish flag. Even if you got through alive, you'd be penniless."

"I'll lose nothing but a few corrals full of wild horses in Texas," replied Nolan. "That isn't much."

"No, we'll not risk it," said David firmly. "But there is one thing you can do for me in Natchez if you will."

"Name it," said Nolan eagerly.

"At Gurdon Thorne's plantation fifteen miles south of Natchez you will find two Germans named Fritts. Ask one or both of them to bring Mrs. Thorne secretly. Say to her that my only regret is that I found out too late. Please do not mention Arcola to her. It is better that she thinks I will die as the result of a duel."

His face worked for a moment and a tear glittered in his eye.

"Say that in my last moment of life I kneel before her and ask her to forgive me. Tell her that I love her—that I always have loved her."

"I will," said Nolan quietly.

David saw himself kneeling before Starr with the fold of her blue gown in his hand and her hand placed upon his shoulder. All he asked to all eternity was to kneel there looking up and drinking in the tragedy of those eyes.

He let out his breath with a sigh that was half a sob and brushed the tears from his eyes. He grasped Nolan's hand and pressed it firmly.

"If you do this for me," he said, "it will mean more than anything else could. Good-bye."

He turned to the waiting lieutenant.

"I am ready," he said.

Chapter 56

FROM HIS CELL IN THE CABILDO DAVID COULD LOOK THROUGH the ambulatory and across the court with its scaffold to the arches of the opposite ambulatory which supported the Doric pillars of the second floor. His only light came from the court through the door and window of iron grillework. By standing close to the door he could see the massive gate which led to the alley behind the prison. It was, he noticed, open much of the time and was closed regularly only at night or when the half dozen prisoners then being entertained in the Cabildo were being exercised in the court.

Exercise time came in the hour before dusk, just at the time, David noted whimsically, that the citizens outside were taking their promenade on the levee. And, just as if they were strolling on the levee, the prisoners, some of them manacled, walked around and around the ambulatory, greeting one another with Latin punctilio and stopping now and then to exchange a word under the lax eye of the guard. This was the ideal time to escape, it occurred to David often, if only the alley gate were not locked so securely and a guard stationed behind it with a row of loaded muskets and pistols on a table beside him.

At first there had been thrust into David's cell twice a day a ration of stew full of nameless vegetables and bits of repulsive meat, and he had eaten it with a bit of corn or rice bread and a tin cup of weak coffee thick with the cast-off grounds from the guards' mess. Lieutenant Martin had allowed David to retain his money belt and it was not long

before he discovered that money would buy a better quality and variety of food, plentiful claret and whiskey, and clean bedclothes. Then, in his boredom, David had taken Daniel Strong's Bible from his war bag and resumed reading it.

On the sixth day after he had entered the Cabildo, David was standing at the door of his cell reading his Bible when he was conscious of the tap of approaching steps. A shadow fell across the page and he looked up. Arcola de Cavalini was standing before him with her veil thrown back. Her face was flushed and her eyes were bright with an unnatural light. A guard stood by one of the arches of the ambulatory but, as David had discovered, he knew no English. The girl leaned against the door as if for support.

"I had to see you, David," she said. "Does this guard understand English?"

"No."

"You must get out of here. Colonel Megarrity will be returning any day now."

"That's easily enough said," replied David, "but not so easy to do."

"Listen," the girl said rapidly. "With Georgette-Simone's help I have gathered and taken everything we will need to a hut in the swamp and made arrangements for us to get over the lake and into the Choctaw country. This evening just before dusk I will come here in men's clothes, knock the outside guard unconscious, and unlock the gate. You must attract the attention of the inside guards while I am doing that."

David looked at Arcola with awe in his eyes. "You would do that for me, after—"

She cut him off abruptly. "I would do *anything* for you, David."

"But you will be a fugitive, too, Arcola."

She touched him with a trembling hand. "I will be with you."

David was silent. The plan seemed sound enough, at least in its first stage, but if he did win free, he would be honor bound to Arcola for the rest of his life. Well, he had done her a great wrong by coming to New Orleans, and perhaps he owed her that much if he lived. She touched his arm.

"Will you be ready?"

"Yes."

"Then watch for me just before dusk."

She was gone. David listened numbly to the clicking of her heels in the passage. He closed his Bible and thrust it into his pocket. He knew that most men would jump at a chance to spend their lives with Arcola, but he was conscious only that she was not Starr.

On sober reflection the chance that they could win through to the Indian country was remote. There were too many obstacles to surmount. They would have to get through the city ramparts, reach the lake and cross it, probably with the hue and cry close on them, and then find their way through a wilderness that was utterly new to him but doubtless familiar to the Spanish. He wished now that he had refused to go through with the plan; his own fate did not matter—he expected to die soon in any event—but he felt that he had practically signed Arcola's death warrant. But there was nothing else to do now and he grimly prepared to do his share.

It was the hour of the promenade. Slowly and with a great affectation of weariness David dragged himself around the ambulatory. Two guards armed with clubs stood in the center of the court by the scaffold with a negligent eye on their wards and the outside guard sat sleepily on his stool with the keys lying beside him on the table. A slender

young man strolled into the archway behind the dozing guard.

David paused behind the pier of an arch and tilted a bottle to his mouth. The bottle dropped to the pavement and David staggered into the court with his hands groping blindly before him. The two guards straightened up. A black substance was oozing from the reeling prisoner's mouth.

"*Vómito negro!*" shouted one of the guards as he scrambled around the scaffold.

The prisoners heard the cry and stopped in their tracks. Another gush of granulated blood issued from David's mouth and prisoners and guards fell back before him. David turned, still groping at the air, and staggered toward the gate. The outside guard was lying on the pavement and the gate was swinging in, before the shoulder of the slender young man. The sick prisoner seized his war bag from the open doorway of his cell, then slipped through the gate and it crashed shut behind him. The inside guards recovered from their terror and rushed to the gate. It was locked. David was coming from the guard's room with "Old Katy" and his powder horn and belt in his hands, and the next moment he and his accomplice had slipped out of the archway into the slowly gathering dusk.

David and Arcola walked rapidly toward the back of the town. Before they had gone many blocks darkness had closed in on them. Arcola slipped her arm in his and he thought she leaned on him as if she needed support.

"What was it you were doing in the court?" she said suddenly.

"I was pretending I had the yellow fever," answered David with a chuckle.

"Pretending? How?"

"Why, with claret and coffee grounds," he said. "Did you have any trouble with the guard?"

"No-o. I hit him pretty hard. I hope I didn't kill him."

"It doesn't matter much," said David. "It's death anyhow for both of us if we're caught."

Her hand tightened on his arm. "I know," she said, "but I don't care. I wouldn't mind dying with you, David."

They walked on in silence for a few moments. "There is a hole in the stockade near the end of St. Philip Street," she said presently. "We must avoid the gates."

They found the gap and slipped cautiously down into the unspeakably filthy ditch. On the other side David hoisted Arcola up the bank and she gave him a hand while he scrambled up. Swiftly and silently she skirted a brickyard and entered a swamp path.

"I've gone over this path a dozen times in the last few days," she whispered. "I don't think they'll follow us here."

For a while she walked rapidly, but presently David noticed that she was slowing down and her figure wavered as if she was not finding proper footing. Within a few minutes she staggered and fell. David bent over her and felt her forehead.

"You have a fever," he exclaimed. "We'd better wait here a while."

"I do have a little headache," she admitted, "but I'm all right. I stumbled over a root."

David put his arm around her waist and supported her as they walked. They reached an arm of the bayou and stopped to rinse some of the filth from their clothes, then Arcola drew a canoe from beneath the bushes.

"You'll have to paddle, David," she said. "I feel worse than I thought."

David helped her into the canoe, laid the rifle beside her,

and pushed out into the bayou. Arcola watched the pattern of the trees against the sky.

"I made this journey alone last night," she said, "so I would be able to find it."

Presently she directed him to turn toward the left shore. She was out of the canoe as soon as it touched the ground.

"Everything we'll need is in a little cabin close by," she said. "As soon as we get our supplies we'll go on to the lake. A fisherman is waiting to put us over it and there are horses on the other shore."

She led the way through the bushes to the cabin and opened the door.

"There is flint and steel over the fireplace," she said. "Will you light a candle?"

David felt his way to the mantle and groped about. There was a slight gurgling sound behind him and he heard something fall to the floor. A fetid odor as of rotten hay assailed his nostrils.

"Arcola!" he cried. "What is the matter?"

There was no answer. He turned and almost fell over the girl slumped in a heap on the floor. He felt for her shoulders and his hand came in contact with her face; it was slimy with a viscous mess and the odor of rotten hay was almost overpowering. David rose and groped frantically for flint, steel, and candle, and with trembling hands made a light. He bent anxiously over Arcola; a glance was sufficient to prove that there was no pretense about this. Her shirt and jacket were slimy with black vomit.

David lifted her to the bunk and wiped the vomit from her face. Her roughly cut hair lay in damp hanks on her forehead and accentuated the pinched expression of her face. Even as he watched there was another rush of blood and as he wiped it from her chin he turned his face. He

had never in his life felt so helpless and panic-stricken. He could understand now the terror that made mothers abandon their children and husbands their wives. It was all he could do to fight down the impulse to rush to the canoe and paddle frenziedly away from that horrible stench and from the certainty of contagion. He set the candle on the mantle and watched her with a kind of terrified fascination. If only there were something he could do! The black vomit, he had heard, was an almost certain sign of impending death. He recalled her feverish face and unnaturally bright eyes when she had talked to him that morning and the certainty smote him that she had deliberately given her life to save him. Not that she had known that she was coming down with yellow fever, but she must have known that she could not go on with him through the wilderness.

He roused himself and searched the cabin for clothes that he could use in catching the vomit and found a couple of linen shirts in one of which Arcola had wrapped her mother's crucifix. He filled a small pot with water from the bayou and poured water from it to the cloth with which he sponged the vomit from her clothes and the bed. He then drew her outer clothes from her and hung them outside the cabin. The vomit had stopped now but he placed a piece of cloth torn from a shirt under her head and covered her body with a blanket. Though he had little faith in its efficacy he placed a damp cloth on her forehead and as the hours of the night wore on he occupied himself in dampening it frequently in the hope that it would relieve her fever. Once as morning was about to break she suddenly started up screaming and David had to hold her in bed by main force while she babbled deliriously. At first she wanted her mother, then it was he, and though he

tried to tell her that he was there she failed to recognize him. The delirium was followed by another attack of vomiting and as he wiped the blood away he discovered that a rash was breaking out on her face.

It must have been about noon that David suddenly became conscious that Arcola was watching him with a little less of the fever in her eyes. Her lips were moving and he stooped to catch her whisper.

"Why—aren't you gone—David?" she was saying.

David shook his head and smiled. "And leave you here?"

Her pinched features struggled to smile. "I intended for you to go on," she said slowly.

"I'll not leave till you're able to travel again," he answered.

"What is the matter with me?" she said presently.

David shook his head. "Just a touch of swamp fever," he lied.

"What is that horrible smell?"

David sniffed. "Just rotten wood and the swamp," he said.

"Now you be quiet so you can get your strength back."

A little later he saw her lips moving again and he bent down.

"I don't think I'm going to live," she said. "You must go on, David."

"Of course you'll live," he returned with a pretense of heartiness. "You'll be all right by tomorrow."

She shook her head slightly. "No, I don't think I want to live."

David looked at her with a touch of moisture in his eyes. "But, my dear," he said, "you can't go now. It seems as though I've only found you—last night."

She looked her gratitude. "Thank you for that tear," she said, "but you don't love me, David. You love—her. Tell me, David, who is she?"

David hesitated.

"Tell me—please."

He gulped the lump in his throat. "Starr Thorne," he said.

"Starr Thorne!" she said feebly. "I remember her. The pale-haired little girl at Ormsby's Tavern. Does she love you?"

David shook his head. "I don't know."

"She must, David," said Arcola, as her feeble voice strengthened for a moment. "She must love you. I wish you both every happiness."

She moved restlessly and the cloth fell from her forehead. David dampened and replaced it.

"You must go, David," she said. "I never intended we should stay here."

"We'll see," he answered soothingly, "when night comes."

"Night!" she exclaimed. "It's beginning to get dark now. You can't wait a minute. Listen, I'll tell you what to do. At the mouth of the bayou there is a fisherman's cottage. He will—"

Her voice trailed away and her breathing became stertorous while her eyes stared in seeming agony at the ceiling. An hour later she passed away, still staring upward. David closed her eyes, then took his tomahawk and began digging in the earthen floor of the cabin. When the hole was ready he placed the crucifix in her folded hands, wrapped her in a blanket, and lifted her gently from the bed to the grave.

It occurred to him now that something more was needed and he reached into the pocket of his hunting shirt where it lay across a crumbling table and drew forth Daniel Strong's Bible. The book opened, almost of its own volition, to Saint John's account of the Last Supper and David read aloud a passage that the minister had underlined.

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

He stopped reading as a ray from the late afternoon sun illuminated the page and seemed for the first time to burn its meaning into his heart. Presently he looked down again and saw another underlined passage: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." This was the measure of what Arcola de Cavalini had given for him.

David closed the book and scooped the earth into the grave. When that was done he gathered the flint and steel and a few other necessities and placed them in a haversack with some food. Everything else that would burn he piled over the grave and then touched a fire to the mass.

From the mouth of the bayou David paddled directly across the lake, trusting to the darkness to protect him from the watchful eyes up the coast in Fort St. John. He had decided not to strike toward the Choctaw country to the north or northeast but to tackle the wilderness that lay northwest between Lake Pontchartrain and Natchez. The Spanish would probably assume that he had started on the shortest and wildest route toward the United States and would not be likely to seek him on the Natchez Road. At least that was his hope.

The Natchez Road, he knew, was almost undistinguishable amongst a maze of trails beyond the lake, but he felt that if he could once put the shore plantations and fishermen's huts behind him he would be reasonably safe. It was

nearly daylight when he sought shelter at the western end of the lake in a cane brake, and there he lay down in his canoe to snatch the sleep he needed before he attempted to solve the puzzle of the trails.

Chapter 57

COLONEL MEGARRITY WAS IN NATCHEZ WHEN HE RECEIVED word of his son's death at the hands of one of the hated Kentucks. He lost no time in embarking for New Orleans, and by driving his men day and night he was able to step on the levee near Governor Carondelet's house early on the morning after David burned the hut in the swamp and fled across Lake Pontchartrain.

Always the Spanish official before anything else, Colonel Megarrity reported that the French General Collot was no such dangerous revolutionary as had been suspected; yet his reputation as one would make him a rallying center for such sans-culottes as existed in St. Louis and New Orleans; therefore it was advisable that when he arrived in the latter place he should be arrested and escorted hastily upon his way.

The governor received his report with exasperating indifference. His mind was occupied, he apologized, by the sudden appearance of a dozen cases of yellow fever in the city, and the medicos, reasoning from the weather, forecast an epidemic of alarming proportions. Yes, they had arrested the murderer of his son, but only the day before yesterday young Braddee had escaped from the Cabildo with the aid of an accomplice who might have been—ahem!—the Señorita de Cavalini in disguise. At least she had disappeared.

Colonel Megarrity threw himself into the search for the supposed murderer of his son. He went immediately to the prison and called Lieutenant Martin before him. The in-

terview was short and to the point. The lieutenant was sharply reprimanded and heavily fined for not having manacled his prisoner as was the custom with murderers. The lieutenant knew better, of course, than to plead that David had merely been detained on suspicion. An hour later, however, he appeared before Megarrity again with Georgette-Simone in tow. A little elementary torture was more than sufficient to refresh her memory and within fifteen minutes a squad of horsemen were on the way to the hut in the back of Drew's plantation.

Colonel Megarrity received the salute of the guard as he walked through the Tchoupitoulas Gate. He was filled with a vast satisfaction that refused to be any less because of the death of his son. After all, Patrick had been a wild young man and the colonel suspected in the back of his mind that his challenge in protection of the paternal honor was merely a move to get rid of a dangerous rival in Arcola's affections. Perhaps it was just as well that things had turned out as they had; it was much better to lose one's mistress to an unknown than to one's own son. Moreover, and here the colonel indulged in a moment of gloating, the way was now open to ruin Terheyden Drew. That much, at least, he owed to the dead Patrick.

Terheyden Drew spoke in a low voice to his chief clerk, then turned and went back into his office. Megarrity sat in the high-backed chair squarely in front of the desk. The merchant rearranged the papers on his desk with painful precision. Beyond the colonel he could see the clerks hastily leaving for the day. Nothing, he reflected—that is, nothing within reason—could have been more perfect to his purpose than the late afternoon hour chosen by the colonel for his visit.

Terheyden Drew placed the tips of his fingers exactly together and waited with cold politeness for his caller to

begin. Megarrity's face wore a glow that was as close to an expression of triumph as the cold Hiberno-Spaniard ever allowed himself.

"You cannot be unaware of the reason for my visit," he said. "Señor Drew, it is my duty to place you under arrest for treason."

Drew crossed his thumbs reflectively. "Treason?" he said. "As bad as that?"

"Yes, treason," returned Megarrity. "Complicity in the murder of my son and in the escape of his assassin."

Drew smiled his quick mechanical smile and moved a paper weight so that it would be exactly in the center of a line drawn diagonally from corner to corner of his desk. Megarrity was conscious of a distinct sense of disappointment, almost of frustration.

"I was not aware of the duel between young Braddee and your son until after it was over," said Drew. "However, since neither Mr. Nolan nor Mr. Braddee can be reached, I presume that I have no defense."

"None that would be accepted by the *law*," said Megarrity with peculiar emphasis upon the last word.

Drew smiled again. "Since you are the law in New Orleans," he observed dispassionately.

"Perhaps," said the colonel, "you were not aware that young Braddee—and presumably Señorita de Cavalini—found refuge in a hut on your plantation."

"It really does begin to look bad for me," observed Drew with entirely academic interest.

"They burned the hut before they left," went on Megarrity. "The ashes were still warm this afternoon."

"I suppose that you are after the fugitives with horse and bloodhound," said Drew.

"Oh, of course. The roads to Biloxi and the Tombigbee settlements are being scoured."

Drew ranged two pens and two pencils neatly on the diagonal lines radiating from the paper weight and squinted carefully to see that they were in exact position.

"I presume," he said, "that you are arresting Poling Sanders also. He was one of the guests at Terheyden the night before your son was—as you say—murdered."

"An inquiry will be made in due time into Señor Sanders' connection with the affair," said the colonel.

"But of course his case will be found much different from mine," said the merchant with the first touch of irony he had employed.

The officer inclined his head. "As you say."

Drew went on. "Perhaps you are not aware that Terheyden Drew, Commission Agent, is, well, shall I say, financially embarrassed. I might almost say on the verge of bankruptcy."

The Spaniard looked his surprise. "You are astonished, it seems," said Drew with his quick smile, "that your plans have succeeded so well. Tut, tut, my friend. You should have more faith in yourself—and in Poling Sanders."

Drew placed his sandbox carefully on a line between himself and the paper weight and studied the effect. "The vultures will have slim picking," he observed.

"Blood of a Jew!" shouted Megarrity, "stop that eternal fussing with things."

Drew looked up in surprise. "Colonel," he chided, "be more moderate." He moved the sandbox a little to one side and regarded it with evident satisfaction. "The condemned criminal," he said, "gets to choose what he will have for his last meal. I choose to 'fuss with things.'"

"Enough of this," said Megarrity rising. "You will come with me." The business was getting out of hand and he proposed to put an end to it.

Drew shifted the sandbox a trifle and stood up. "Of

course, colonel," he said, "I am always at your service." His hand was in the breast of his coat, then was suddenly withdrawn. Megarrity's eyes widened with horror. The pistol cracked. A neat stain appeared precisely in the center of the Spaniard's forehead and he slumped to the floor.

The merchant blew at the puff of acrid smoke issuing from the muzzle of his pistol and walked around the desk. The look of horror was frozen to the Spaniard's face. Drew stooped and lifted the body with some difficulty, carried it into the warehouse, and deposited it in a corner. He straightened the limbs and closed the eyes with the care of an undertaker, then ranged several bales of cotton in front of and over the body, so that it would not be found by the night watchman when he arrived. Then he returned to his office and cleaned and reloaded his pistol.

In the door of the office he paused and looked back. One of the window hangings was a little awry and he straightened it before he locked the door. He walked the length of the silent warehouse viewing the neat rows of cotton bales and the carefully ordered hogsheads of tobacco and molasses and the barrels of flour and casks of wine. His only regret was that circumstances would not permit him to set fire to the warehouse and see it go up in smoke before vandal hands desecrated its perfect arrangement.

Terheyden Drew drove home more slowly than usual, if anything. The bayou road, he thought, had never looked so beautiful nor had the birds sung so sweetly. When he arrived at Terheyden he called for a bath and after he had bathed he dressed meticulously in his finest black velvet and went for a stroll in the garden. He was forgetfully making notes of several points that needed to be brought to the attention of the gardener when black-haired Marie appeared on the terrace wearing her favorite yellow gown. Drew smiled and drew her arm through his and continued

his walk while he gravely discussed with her the affairs of the household as if she were its mistress.

Dinner was served with Edmond's usual éclat, and the string quartet played a group of Mozart sonatas that Drew had specially arranged years before. He sat at the head of the table with two of the octoroons on each side. The vacant foot disturbed him as always. Once he had thought of asking Marie to sit there, but the thought of the rivalry it might create prevented him, and moreover it would destroy the balance on each side.

The meal was preceded by golden Amontillado, chilled in ice brought from the Ohio in a flatboat, then there was a rich, creamy onion soup. He was glad that Edmond had ordered onion soup. There was nothing, he reflected, in the entire curriculum of food to compare with it. Ah, pompano with sauce Creole and white wine of Beaune. Then there was roast lamb, and rice with butter sauce and a dash of paprika. And claret, his favorite Pont Gaillard. Terheyden Drew ate and drank sparingly and with deliberation. He tasted his sherbet, then lit a cigar at the candle officiously held by Edmond.

He rose and offered his arm to the red-headed girl, who had sat at his right. The panels between the orchestra box and the drawing room were slid apart and those in the dining room closed. The girls sat demurely over their Creole coffee and Terheyden Drew sat by a small table with a silver candelabrum and finished his cigar between sips of coffee. The *Moniteur de la Louisiane* lay unopened on his knee. He packed and lit his long Dutch pipe, while he wished that the mosquitoes were not so troublesome as practically to bar a person from the garden after sundown. He opened the *Moniteur* and read with the ghost of a smile of the late *affaire d'honneur* between the lamented son of Colonel Megarrity and a barbarian Kentuck.

The girls had taken up their sewing and were chatting together in low tones. Night had fallen, a cool night, thank God. Just four pipes, Drew promised himself, then the cards. Marie must have felt his eyes on her for suddenly, in the midst of a sentence, she looked up and smiled at him. Somehow it seemed to send a glow to his heart and set him to thinking what might have been. Perhaps—

The cards were brought and Drew looked at their faces and slyly dug his nail into the queen of spades. He had never cheated before. This once—the first and last time—would scarcely matter.

Perhaps two hours later Drew rose quietly and went to his own room, where the candles were still burning, and put on the black velvet dress suit again. He let himself silently out the front door and walked slowly through the Italian garden and past the fish pond and the kiosk to the bayou. A cicada, disturbed by some night prowler, rasped an alarm and the cry was taken up by other cicadas in the trees along the bayou. In the distance an alligator set up its bellow and there was an answer from the swamp behind Terheyden. For a long moment Drew stood inhaling the perfume of the late orange blossoms and looking back at the moonlit domain which had been his only pride for twenty years, then turned to the water gate. The mechanism creaked dismally and the mosquitoes were active in spite of the slight chill in the air, but finally the gates swung back and the water began rushing through.

Drew hastened across the garden and into the house. For a moment he hesitated. It would be more dramatic to take the four girls with him but he was at heart a merciful man and he shrank from such a course. He knocked on the door of Edmond's room and ordered him to go to the slave camp, then ascended the stairs and gave similar orders to the girls.

He sat in the drawing room with all the candelabra lit, smoking his Dutch pipe again. His brace of duelling pistols lay on the table beside him. The girls came down the stairs talking in hushed tones and he heard Marie tell the others to go on. The door clicked behind them. She was wearing the filmy yellow gown, he noted; she had not intended to leave. She sat down in a chair across the table from him and moved the candelabrum so that she could see him.

"What is it, Terheyden?" she said.

It was the first time she had called him anything but Mr. Drew, and he felt his heart strangely warmed for the second time that evening. He waved a hand to indicate the room and the house.

"This is all over," he said.

"You mean you are bankrupt?"

"Yes. That and other things."

"I think I know," she said. "Colonel Megarrity and Poling Sanders."

He slowly turned toward her. "How did you know? No, never mind. It doesn't matter now." He hesitated for a moment. The candelabrum was not in the center of the table. He adjusted it and pushed his chair back so that he could see Marie. "I shot Megarrity this afternoon," he said.

Marie nodded calmly. "So would any man of honor. Did you kill him?"

"Yes. I hid his body behind some cotton bales in the warehouse. They're not likely to find him before morning."

"And there is no way of escape." It was a statement rather than a question.

"None. I am not active nor woods-wise, and even if I were my chances would be slim. You see, Megarrity was arresting me for treason, on a charge of having conspired against the peace and safety of His Majesty's realm by aiding Braddee to escape."

"But you didn't?"

"No. The trouble is that he and the girl stayed for a while in a hut on this plantation back in the swamp. When he learned that, Megarrity came to arrest me at once. I shot him, not so much to get revenge as to insure myself the privilege of dying in my own way—in 'Terheyden'."

"What are you going to do?"

Terheyden Drew smiled, and his expression was wistful in spite of his masklike face. "The Indian," he said, "when he goes to the happy hunting ground has his most valued possessions buried with him in order that he may feel at home in the future life. I think that I shall take 'Terheyden' with me—at least as much as I can."

The girl was silent. His words needed no interpretation.

"In a way," he went on, "I envy young Braddee and his Arcola. If they live they will be together; if they die—"

Marie stood up with the candelabrum in her hand.

"Are you ready—to go?" she said.

The man looked at her with something akin to wonder in his eyes. She smiled and nodded at the brace of pistols.

"Did you think I would not stay?" she said. "There are two of them—and two of us."

"Perhaps," he spoke with difficulty, "perhaps I had dared to hope."

Slowly she made the circuit of the room, igniting the heavy, inflammable draperies at windows and doors. Then she returned to her seat and set the candelabrum down, exactly in the center of the table. The flames were eating into the panelling of the walls and the room was already unbearably hot.

The girl looked steadily into his eyes and smiled. Every hideous mark and scar on his face was distinct in the glare of the flames. Her hand was on the table and his left hand came up to cover it.

"If I had only known in time," he whispered, half to himself.

"But it *is* time, Terheyden," she said. "There can be no regrets where we are going."

"No regrets," he echoed. "There we can be together and the world will not care."

His hand was on one of the pistols. She was still smiling into his eyes. "Shoot straight, Terheyden," she said. "This is my wedding dress and I don't want it spoiled."

The pistol cracked, and a red stain rushed to her rounded bosom. Marie's hand moved convulsively in Terheyden Drew's.

"Terheyden," she gasped. "Did I ever tell you—your smile—"

Her head fell over on the table. The man laid down the empty pistol and reached slowly for the other one. His eyes were still fixed upon the glory of her hair.

Chapter 58

DAVID STOOD IN THE CLEARING BESIDE THE STREAM AND idly kicked the dead ashes of a campfire. Indian, by all the signs, and that meant that there was supposed to be a ford at this point. David looked at the rushing water doubtfully. He had not encountered such a stream since the Tanseypaho, two days before, and he had managed to get across that only because his foot had struck a sunken log when the water was almost up to his chin. Queer how there was so much water in the streams when there were no springs and no rainfall. More than once he had felt himself almost ready to drop with thirst among the flinty dry oaks and pines of the uplands, and it was only the drenching dew on the grass at night that had enabled him to quench his thirst and go on.

The sound of hoofs on the opposite bank suddenly sent him plunging into the dense bushes beside the stream. Presently a lone horseman came into view and rode unhesitatingly into the stream. The man's body was half hidden by the water and only the horse's head appeared above the surface. David peered between the branches of a paw-paw bush. The rider's boldly handsome features and ruddy complexion were the same that had first been impressed on David's mind in the arbor behind the Black Horse Tavern at Canonsburg. It was David Bradford, one-time leader of the western insurrection.

David stepped from the bushes and stood waiting with his rifle across his arm. Bradford rode his dripping horse up the bank and reined in beside the silent young man.

"How are you, Mr. Bradford?" asked David.

The horseman's face showed his surprise. "I'm afraid you have somewhat the advantage of me," he said. "May I ask your name?"

"Sure; but I'll tell it to you on only one condition."

"What is that?"

"That you never tell a soul you saw me."

Bradford's curiosity was piqued. "All right, I agree," he answered readily.

"My name's David Braddee, late of Pittsburgh and of the Walnut Street Jail in Philadelphia."

Bradford's ruddy complexion flushed an even ruddier hue. "Yes, I remember you now. You brought the news of the first attack on Bower Hill to the Black Horse Tavern."

David nodded. "I might better have held my tongue. There was a passel of suffering in the western country because of that day's work, Mr. Bradford."

Bradford jerked his horse's head angrily. "I take it that you blame me, Mr. Braddee."

"Not altogether," answered David. "I think we all of us had our share in it. Perhaps we were behind the times. Perhaps the general government is destined to rule us some day."

"Or we it," amended Bradford, somewhat mollified. He swung from his horse. "But there! I keep forgetting that I'm a Spaniard now. The internal policies of the United States have nothing to do with me."

"Spain has ceded the Natchez country to the United States," said David. "A fellow name of Pinckney was the negotiator. Word arrived in New Orleans only a few days ago."

Bradford showed unmistakable traces of alarm. "What is the boundary of the cession, do you know?"

"The river and the thirty-first parallel."

Bradford's agitation subsided as rapidly as it had risen. He laughed apologetically. "I thought that my plantation might have been within the cession," he said, "but it's not. We old excise rebels can't afford to trust ourselves within the reach of the federal government."

"I paid my penalty," said David coldly, "and I can go where I please. And I was *not* a rebel—then."

"Yes, I know," said Bradford ingratiatingly. "We all thought we were defending a principle."

David saw that the man had misunderstood him, but he let the matter pass. "I hear that you have a cotton plantation at Bayou Sara," he said. "How are you doing?"

"I can't complain," answered Bradford warily. "My misfortune has been turned to my advantage. The life of a planter is much to be preferred to riding the circuit after a judge who huffs and puffs from the bench in broad Scots. You say you were sent a prisoner to Philadelphia? Tell me something about it."

They sat on a fallen tree while David told him briefly of the prisoners' march into Philadelphia, and noted to himself with surprise that he no longer felt the old reaction at the thought of those experiences.

Bradford rose and took his horse's reins from an upturned root of the tree. "I must be going," he said. "I have twenty miles to ride before nightfall. I have just returned from seeing a minister on his way."

"Daniel Strong?" queried David.

"Why, yes," answered Bradford in surprise. "Do you know him?"

"Slightly."

"Well, he can't have more than a few hours' start. You can probably catch him if you wish. Are you traveling all alone?"

"Yes."

"With no horse and no equipment?"

"Just as you see me."

"Well, here, take my horse. If you ever have the money you can pay me for him. Otherwise, just consider it a little gift from one rebel to another."

"As a matter of fact," said David slowly, "you could be juggled for even talking to me. I had a duel in New Orleans—well, it's a long story, but the other fellow fired two shots when one had been agreed on, so I killed him. I should have picked some one else to pot. His father is a heap big chief, so his friends had me locked up. I broke prison and here I am."

"Who was it?"

"Patrick Megarrity."

Bradford was silent for a moment, then he held out the reins to David. "I still say take the horse," he said. "When it becomes a matter of choice I think I'm still an American."

David smiled at him with more warmth in his heart than he had ever before felt for the man.

"I reckon you pass, lawyer," he said, "but I'll not take the beast. I can outwalk any horse that ever was foaled."

Bradford threw the reins over his horse's head and mounted. "At least I can help you over the creek," he said, "and set you on your way."

During the next two days David's feet steadily ate up the distance between Bayou Sara and Natchez. Gradually he left the pine barrens behind and came out in a beautiful, rich upland with heavy growths of hickory, walnut, oak, poplar, and magnolia, and with enormous grapevines festooned from tree to tree. Plantations of cotton had begun to appear and David found it frequently necessary to leap into the bushes to avoid being seen by horsemen.

It was during the morning of the second day that his forehead began to feel queer. At first he laid the trouble to

the heat of the sun on his bare head, but he doggedly refused to stop for rest. It was the first time in his life that he had experienced a headache, save as a hangover from too much whiskey, and he did not propose to yield to it. Presently he saw on a rise before him the big frame of Daniel Strong mounted on his rawboned gray horse. Tacitly glad of an excuse to moderate his pace David slowed down enough to remain at a safe distance behind the minister for several hours. It was late in the afternoon when Daniel Strong descended into a glen to drink at a spring and David slipped by him. In his fevered brain every step seemed to echo like an explosion, and he thought that the throbbing of his heart should have been audible for a hundred yards. Though he knew that these were fancies he was not surprised when within a few moments he heard the minister's stentorian voice.

"David Braddee!" he was shouting. "Wait up a minute."

The big gray nag was coming at a lumbering gallop, so David decided that there was nothing for him to do but obey. The preacher reached down a paw and shook David's hand heartily.

"What do you mean by hanging back all afternoon," he demanded, "and then trying to slip by when you thought I wasn't looking?"

"Why, I didn't know you had seen me," said David.

"Seen you! Son, you forgot I was brought up in the woods and served my stint as a scout with Forbes and Bouquet."

"Well, to tell the truth, reverend," said David, rather sheepishly, "I'm not very popular in these parts. I'm trying to get through as quietly as I can and back to the states."

"Hm! Sounds like you'd been in trouble," said the minister. "Is there anything I can do?"

"Yes," said David readily. "You can forget you saw me."

"Well, that'll be a mite hard to do," said the preacher re-

flectively. "Suppose you tell me what the trouble is, so I can judge for myself."

David told him briefly as much as he cared to repeat, and the clergyman's piercing eyes bored into him. Daniel Strong knew that he was not hearing the whole story and David knew that he knew, but the minister gave no outward sign.

"You *are* in a peck of trouble," said the minister slowly when David had finished. "While I do not wish to condone your conduct, yet I realize that there are mitigating circumstances. What friends have you about here that you could trust?"

David mentioned the Frittses.

"Fritts Major and Minor, of course," chuckled the preacher. "Yes, I know them. They are good Christians and good Arminians, but I suspect them of heresy in the article that concerns the second week of grace. They speak highly of their association with you on the river. Do you plan on stopping with them?"

"Only for an hour or so," answered David. "I have some—some business with them." It suddenly occurred to him that he had only a vague idea of this business save that it concerned Starr. He had tried to plan what he would do, but his head had pained him so that he had been forced to give his attention to his feet.

"You have a fever," said the minister suddenly.

"Yes," assented David, "just a touch of swamp fever. It will pass." That was what he had told Arcola, he suddenly remembered, and he wondered dully if it was not yellow fever that had him now. He stepped out with a brave show of assurance. The pain was not confined to his forehead any longer, but had invaded the small of his back with such force that it took all his will power to stand erect.

"I didn't know the whiskerandoes would let a Protestant hold public meetings," he said conversationally.

"They don't," answered Daniel Strong.

"Then what—?"

"Well," said the minister as a humorous light danced in his eyes, "I can't help it if it's known that I am at such and such a place and the neighbors gather in to converse."

"While I do not wish to condone your conduct," said David gravely, "yet I realize that there are mitigating circumstances."

The minister's Gargantuan laughter rolled among the trees. "You got me under the fifth rib that time," he shouted.

His merriment died away as suddenly as it had risen. David was lying beside the trail with his body shaken and his teeth rattling with chills. The minister was off his horse in an instant.

"There's more than a *touch* of swamp fever here," he muttered. "It's as downright healthy a case as I ever saw."

He unfolded David's blanket and rolled him in it, then turned to tie David's rifle and war bag to the saddle. The chills ceased presently and David lay limp and half-conscious in his blanket. The minister took some rawhide thongs from a saddlebag and tied the blanket around the young man's body, then lifted him to the saddle and tied his feet loosely together under the horse's belly. It was a rough way to treat a sick man, Daniel Strong reflected, but it was necessary to get him to a house and place him in the care of friends. But as he walked he was puzzled that David still seemed unconscious; an attack of ague, he knew, should have been followed by a lucid interval, but David remained slumped over the horse's neck, utterly unable to hold himself in the saddle. He was muttering to himself, also, like a child with bad dreams.

"*Vómito negro*," he shouted suddenly. "I knowed it's git ye. It's got ye—it's got ye—it's got ye."

Daniel Strong's blood ran cold at the words that had such

a terrible meaning on the lower river. The yellow fever was nothing new to him, for he had nursed scores of its victims in the Philadelphia epidemic, but to be confronted with it on a lonely road far from friends and medical aid was something else. He must get David to the Frittses, he decided desperately; otherwise the boy might die, and even if he did not die, anyone else would be likely to surrender him to the authorities. As he walked with his powerful left hand supporting the sick man in the saddle he raised his heart in an appeal to heaven for aid. He reminded the Almighty of the assurance he had received nearly two years before on the Washington Road that this young man was marked for God and he pled that the promise might not be forgotten. Then his eye fell upon David's war bag, which was being pressed out of shape by a rectangular object. He fumbled in the bag and drew out the Bible that he had given to David. Daniel Strong was not above sharing the streak of superstition that ran through the eighteenth century and that colored the lives even of the Methodist ministry, so it was that the sight of the Bible came as a good omen—as a prompt assurance that his prayer would be answered—and his heart felt lighter as he walked beside his big gray nag and its unconscious burden.

It was daylight when they reached the cabin that the Frittses called home. Daniel Strong led his horse to the door and knocked with his free hand. Fritts Major, already dressed, opened the door.

"Vy, Bruder Strong," he cried, "Velcome, velcome." His eyes rested upon the horse and its burden. "Vat you got here?"

"David Braddee," said the minister. "He's sick unto death."

"Dafid Brattee!" exclaimed the German. "Johann, it iss Dafid Brattee. He iss not deat."

Fritts Minor appeared beside his father. "Ve hat vort he was in chail," he explained. "Ve t'ot him by now deat."

"He escaped," said the minister laconically.

"Vell, bring him in, pastor. Bring him in," said Fritts Major.

"Just a moment, Brother Johann. I think he has the yellow fever—and of course there will be a price on his head."

The minister could see Fritts Major's face blench where his whiskers did not cover it. Then the German recovered and a slow smile came to his eyes. He looked at his son as if taking counsel.

"I denk ve ein Christian duty haff, Bruder Strong," he said. "I hold him vile du cutst de rawhide."

* * * * *

Starr Thorne looked down with tears brimming in her eyes. "Oh, David, my darling," she cried brokenly, and sank beside the bed and buried her face in the blankets. David unconsciously flailed his hand against her hair and she held it against her cheek and bathed it in tears.

Daniel Strong stood across the room in his shirt sleeves, with a basin of water and a cloth in his hands. He understood now some of the incoherent things that had come from David's lips during the long night ride. He turned to Fritts Minor and his face wore a forbidding aspect that would have shaken anyone less grounded in tranquillity.

"You should not have brought her here," he said.

Fritts Minor turned his calm, full-moon face upon the minister. "Vy nicht?"

"She is a married woman," answered Strong harshly. "It is not seemly—"

"Bruder Strong," interrupted Fritts Major, placidly but firmly, "let Gott judge between dem. Dere iss t'ings here ve know not."

Daniel Strong lowered his eyes before the calm gaze of the German. "You are right, Brother Johann," he said humbly. "I am too much used to being a judge in Israel."

Starr rose and faced the three men. "What can I do to help him?" she pleaded.

"There is no certain treatment for yellow fever," the minister said. "Drugs and medical skill are useless. All we can do is keep him absolutely quiet and try to reduce the fever with cold compresses and bathing. I saw many brought through the fever in Philadelphia by that method."

She reached for the basin and cloth. "If that can save his life," she said quietly, "he will live."

In that day female nurses for male patients were not favored by the morally upright, so it was not remarkable that Daniel Strong was scandalized by Starr's action. He would have protested at once, but Fritts Major's hand on his arm restrained him, and it was not long before he found himself wondering if the light touch of the woman was not the only thing that lay between David and death. Even the herculean minister marvelled at Starr's unceasing vigilance and inexhaustible strength. Hour after hour she knelt by the low bed, changing the compresses and bathing the sick man with untiring hands, seemingly indifferent to the fetid, rotten-hay odor of his body. This, thought Daniel Strong, as he watched her, was the love that passed understanding, and a pang of regret assailed him that he had gone by life's zenith without having ever known it. Such was his iron rectitude, however, that he never wavered in his resolution to find a way to keep those two young people apart. With him it was not simply a matter of social mores—he saw two immortal souls in danger of eternal damnation and felt that his oath as a minister bound him to snatch them from hell. But meanwhile he held his peace and waited.

For two days Starr labored, save for a few quarter hours

of rest, to relieve David's fever. Sometimes there were periods of delirium, when dragging pulse and burning fever brought him close to the line of worlds, and he would shout incoherent phrases and try to leap from the bed. It was at such times that the great strength of the minister proved most useful. For the first time, also, Starr found proof in his ravings of the hell that David had lived through during the past year. There were names spoken and incidents incoherently re-lived that he would have given his life to conceal, yet through the dark and terrible pattern ran the one bright thread of his love for her, and Starr wept with sorrow and joy at the revelations.

At the end of the second day there came a tremendous bowel movement and Daniel Strong pushed Starr aside while he washed the patient, cleaned up the bed, and changed the sheets. When he was through he laid his hand on David's cheek, then rubbed his fingers together.

"Thank God!" he exclaimed. "His sweat is glutinous. I believe he will pull through."

Chapter 59

FROM THAT HOUR DAVID'S PULSE BEGAN TO QUICKEN AND his fever to abate. Starr returned to the plantation house and slept for sixteen dreamless hours. When she awoke it occurred to her for the first time that her husband might have traced her to the Fritts cabin, but Coffeen reassured her on this point. Gurdon Thorne had not returned from Natchez and had sent no word as to when he would. As a matter of fact he had not spent ten days on his plantation since its purchase, but had left the management to Starr and the Frittses while he gave his complete attention to losing the remainder of his wife's fortune in gambling, cock-fighting, and drinking with a new crowd of boon companions in Natchez.

This negligence of the plantation, however, had proved of advantage, for under the direction of Coffeen, who knew something of cotton culture, a crop had been planted and was thriving, and lately the indefatigable Germans had devoted themselves to cleaning up the orchard and barnyard and repairing the buildings.

When Starr returned to David's bedside he was lying peacefully with his eyes closed. For the first time in months he was free from the sensation that he was living under the influence of a powerful drug. The cankers of bitterness and rebellion had been purged that morning when he had been placed under arrest in the grove of live oaks behind "Terheyden," and now the cobwebs that had obscured his mind's eyes were gone; in giving up his struggle for freedom he had found, for the moment at least, a larger freedom than he

had ever dreamed of. The delectable country seemed very close to him, waiting for him to stretch out his hand and accept it.

Slowly he opened his eyes and bent upon Starr the first smile that she had ever seen upon his face. It gave him a wistful sweetness that was far different from the savage laughter that had once dwelt there.

"I dreamed that you went with me through the valley of the shadow," he said, "and when I awoke they told me you had been here."

She took his hand without a word and pressed it to her cheek while the tears rushed to her eyes.

"When I am well again," he said, "I will try to lead a different life. Will you go with me and help me start over?"

"Yes, David," she answered, "I will go."

David's condition had turned for the better, but it was weeks before he was out of danger. Days of languor alternated with chills and rigors; he was scarcely allowed to lift his head from the pillow lest it injure his heart; drafts were kept from him scrupulously; and little food was given him save broth. He had been spared the black vomit, but the aftermath of his illness brought an agony of boils that put Daniel Strong in mind that Job must have been afflicted with yellow fever. By the end of June, however, all unfavorable symptoms were gone and David was allowed to venture outdoors for the first time.

It had not been difficult to keep secret the fact of David's presence on the plantation, since few people, least of all Gurdon Thorne, ever crossed the fields to visit the slave cabins in the shelter of the woods. Daniel Strong, however, dreaded to return to Natchez lest he be called upon to explain his prolonged absence, so he decided to avoid the situation by going on a "missionizing" tour to the Tensas settlements north of Mobile; thence he could cut back to

the Chickasaw Road to Nashville and Louisville. The problem of David's and Starr's relation to each other had been much on his mind and before his departure he took occasion to speak to Starr alone.

"My daughter," he began kindly, "before I leave I feel it my duty to take up a certain matter with you. I refer to your relationship to the young man David."

The interview was not unexpected to Starr. The minister's disapproval of her conduct in nursing David had not escaped her quick perceptions and it was obvious that a gentleman of the cloth would oppose the ripening of their love affair. She was silent, however, and the silence encouraged him to go on even though he was vaguely uneasy at the inscrutable, half-blind expression in her eyes. As was natural to him when he was doubtful he jumped directly to the point.

"This—attraction between you and David cannot go on," he said. "You have given your life to another man."

The directness of her silent gaze continued to disturb him and made him irritated at his own cowardice.

"Don't you see," he plunged ahead, "that it would be sinful in both of you to yield. My child, this attraction is only for a time; it will pass. You have your immortal soul and David's to consider."

"We love each other," said Starr simply. "We are going away together."

The minister was scandalized at this proof that the affair had gone even further than he had thought.

"You can't do that!" he cried harshly.

"Why not?"

"Child, can't you see? Because you are a married woman."

"I do not love my husband and he does not love me."

"Yes, I know something of that, but we have Scriptural guidance—what God has joined together let no man put asunder."

"I was only fourteen when I was married. How could I have been expected to know what was best for me?"

"You consented to it, didn't you?"

"Ye-e-es."

"Then you are bound to Gurdon Thorne by a sacred tie that only God can break by taking one of you away."

Starr was silent again. What little religious training she had had was all on the side of the sacredness of the ministry, but this blast of sacerdotal wrath only reminded her of her once brave resolution not to stand in the way of David's advancement toward a better life. Daniel Strong saw the struggle in her face and smugly misinterpreted it. He drew himself up with all the black dignity of the priesthood.

"It is not I who judge you," he said with sombre emphasis. "It is God."

"But my promise to David?" said Starr.

"A bad promise is best broken," returned the minister with triumphant unction. "And besides—what of your marriage vow to Gurdon Thorne—and to God."

It did not occur to him that she might think her promises to God and Thorne the ones best broken, and though it did occur to her he had already seen his advantage and rushed in to beat down her guard.

"You do not have simply your own soul to think of," he urged, "but David's as well. God has given me the assurance that he has called the young man to preach the gospel. Could he do this and live in sin with you? Are you going to ruin his usefulness to mankind? Are you going to quench the fire in him that might burn so brightly for God? Child, don't do this awful thing or the guilt will stain your soul to all eternity."

The hopelessness and tragedy in the girl's eyes as she looked up at him pierced even Daniel Strong's triple-plated armor of righteousness. He felt like a judge who for reasons

of state has condemned an innocent to life imprisonment in the dungeon.

"What must I do?" asked Starr quietly.

"As soon as he is able to travel," answered Daniel Strong, "you must tell him you can never see him again, and send him on his way. Will you do this?"

"I will," she answered him numbly.

She had not once taken her eyes from the minister's. Life was beautifully simple to Daniel Strong; his faith answered all the riddles of the universe. The tragedy of frustration in the unrighteous he explained easily—they did not trust the divine plan. But now the half blindness in Starr's eyes that had disturbed him at first had returned, and he found himself wondering uneasily if there were not things behind the mask that even his faith could not explain. But the doubt passed. God knew what was best, he reminded himself, and was able to work out of this light affliction, which was but for a moment, a far greater and eternal weight of glory. His mind was as sincerely free as if he had taken no part in the blasting of these two lives.

* * * * *

If Daniel Strong thought that he had won a decisive victory on both fronts he was led astray by the self-assurance which had come from long practice as a judge in Israel. Starr intended to keep her promise; she even felt grateful to the minister for reminding her of her forgotten resolution. Minister, lawyer, merchant, it made no difference to her what David became, just so he attained the stature of the man he had once envisioned.

As for herself, that was a different matter. The future could hold no hell such as she had known in the past. She even doubted the possibility of a life after death, and Daniel Strong would have been scandalized if he could have known

how little she was disturbed as to the future of her soul or David's. Her practical view came both from a wealth of experience in adversity that no Daniel Strong could boast and from a superb, inborn balance that alone had been responsible for her continued sanity. Release David she would, and gladly, because of the love she bore him, but cease to love him—never! No God that she would acknowledge could deny her that.

The days of July slipped away while David awaited impatiently the time when he would be strong enough to leave. Once he thought of traveling the Chickasaw Road to Nashville, but he gave this up as too difficult and perilous a journey for Starr to undertake. It so happened, however, that on one of his trips into town, Coffeen learned that Bull Canady was in Natchez and with the resourcefulness that characterized him he found the patroon and obtained his promise to stop upon his return from New Orleans and smuggle David on board. David had proposed to Starr that she go with him and she had allowed him to think she had consented.

Meanwhile David took on the scanty household duties of the Fritts menage, then as his strength came back he chopped down trees and cut them up for firewood, or undertook hoeing stints mornings and evenings in the cotton fields. There were evenings as well when he wandered with Starr in the woods, careless of Fritts Major's mildly disapproving air. Life stretched before him now, smooth and pleasant and sheltered as the parkways that led to the planters' houses, with only the initial problem of getting out of Spanish territory to be solved.

It was late in August before Bull Canady came back up the river. Mike came with Jim Girty to tell him that their spree in Natchez-under-the-Hill was about over and that

they planned to leave at daylight the morning after the next. Mike also had other news.

"This galoot, Colonel Megarrity, whose son you kilt, he war found shot dead in Drew's warehouse not two days after you broke jail."

"Is that so?" exclaimed David with interest. It might be the reason why there had been no more hue and cry after him. "Who shot him?"

"Terheyden Drew. He burnt down his mansion that night with himself an' one o' his gals in it. An' by the way, how did you git out o' the Cabildo? Some say it war the sloe-eyed gal as helped ye."

"It was," answered David slowly. "She was sick with yellow fever at the time and died in the swamp the next day."

Mike clucked sympathetically. "The yellow jack's got Orleens proper," said Girty. "They say it won't let up 'til the cold weather sets in."

"Mike," said David presently, "you don't think Bull would object if I brought Mrs. Thorne along?"

"I thought somethin' like this would be up sooner er later," replied Mike. "Why should he kick? We're friends o' his, ain't we? Hit'll jist be hard on you an' her spendin' most o' her time in the box 'til we reaches the Ohio."

In the evening when David told Starr that they must leave the next night she fastened on him the old unseeing gaze that told him there were hidden thoughts behind her eyes.

"These are our last evenings here together," she said.

They walked in the dusk on the edge of the woods with the yellow star grass peeping from the red clay under their feet and the fragrance of the clover rising about them like incense from another world. Starr dropped to the ground and pulled David down beside her. She waved a hand at the cottonfield and the woods.

"All this," she said softly, "is to end tonight."

"There will be other fields and other woods, Starr," replied David, "and we will be together there."

She turned and fixed him with a look that was vaguely disturbing. She should not be reluctant to leave the Natchez country, thought David. After all it was not the only beautiful land in the world.

"David," she said, "you are going to marry me, aren't you?"

"As soon as ever I can," he said, "I will marry you, as reverently, as truly, as though Thorne were dead."

"David, in all the time you have known me, you have never touched me."

"I know," he replied, and his voice was scarcely audible. "I think I have loved you too much for that."

She was looking into his eyes with a hunger that cried out as plainly as words. David felt the hot blood of passion surging through him.

"It has not been easy," she said.

David struck his knee with his clenched fist. "God knows, there has never been such a woman, so—so altogether desirable. I am not worthy of you, Starr. My life will be too short to atone for the wrongs I have done you."

"They are forgotten, David. Being with you is all that matters now." She swayed toward him; a lifetime of passion glowed in her luminous eyes and was vibrant in her blood-charged lips and every tender curve of her body. "Soon we'll be free from all this. I think I would wish you—"

David's arms went out and crushed her with a cruelty that was like a caress to her. This was the moment of fulfillment. This was the love that had been destined for them since the foundation of the world. He felt like something unclean because he had not waited for her, and yet now he was exalted above all men as he had never been exalted

before. Some insects, he had heard, lived only for one mating flight, then fell lifeless to the earth. Now he knew their ecstasy and envied their death at the moment of rapture.

Night had fallen over them like a kindly canopy. Far away a whippoorwill repeated the mournful call that had run through their moment of ecstasy like the melancholy undercurrent of every human life. Starr sat up on the fragrant bed of clover and David sensed that she was weeping softly and silently. Like the clang of discordant bells the significance of his act was driven in upon him. This was the woman he worshipped, and he had broken her as if she were no more than an old clay pot. He would have spoken to her in humble, futile apology, but she turned on him almost fiercely. "I am glad—glad," she cried. "Do you know what it means to me? It means that I have lived. No matter what happens now, nothing can ever take that from me."

A chill of foreboding surged through David's veins. "We'll get away," he began bravely, but she cut him short.

"This is our last time together, David," she said. "I am not going with you."

David lay for a moment like one who has been stunned.

"Why not?" he said presently. "I thought it was agreed between us."

"It was," she answered and there was a catch in her voice, "but I am a married woman, David. I would be a hindrance to you."

She went on and David listened with half his mind. A score of indications came to him now that he might have read before had he not been living in a rose-colored haze—her moments of abstraction, her tacit assent to his plans, the lengthening periods between their meetings. He remembered Fritts Major looking down his nose at them, but then

that was to be expected. And Daniel Strong! David was suddenly conscious that he had placed his finger on the source of the trouble. If the minister had tried to conceal his disapproval he had succeeded badly; it must have been he who had persuaded Starr that she must let David go. David imagined the scene, the cajolery, the fatherliness, the threats of divine wrath. Well, Daniel Strong might put it over on a woman like that but not on a man, even though he had helped to save that man's life. A man's own business was his own—at least a westerner's—and neither God nor the ministry had a right to interfere.

David rose to his feet and reached down his hand to Starr. It had been around six weeks since Daniel Strong had departed for the Tensaw villages. He ought to be heading toward Nashville by now.

* * * * *

When Starr answered the tap on the door she saw the two Germans standing in the gallery with Mike Fink and James Girty.

"Dey say Dafid nicht join dem," said Fritts Major. He held out a folded square of paper. "Mebbe dis tell w'y."

Starr took the paper uncertainly and a flush suffused her face. "I'm sorry," she said, "I don't read handwriting very well."

"I'll read it," offered James. Starr gave him the paper. A dreadful foreboding had taken all the strength from her body and she slumped limply into a porch chair. James unfolded the note and cleared his throat.

"Dear Starr," he read. "I have decided to go by the Chickasaw Road and avoid the Spanish forts on the river. I will not risk seeing the boys in town, so tell them this if they enquire. Remember, my promise still holds. If you ever need me call on me just as though I was your husband."

James turned the paper over, then glanced back at the writing. "It's signed 'D.'," he said.

"Air you still goin' with us, Miz Thorne?" asked Mike.

Starr shook her head numbly. "No, Mike," she said slowly. "I think that is why David took the Chickasaw Road."

Chapter 60

THE CHICKASAW MOVED HIS HAND TOWARD THE STREAM in a wooden gesture.

"She Creek country," he said. "Me not go dar."

The fellow smelled abominably of sweat and burnt wood and David was half glad to get rid of him; it had been all he could do during the heat of the day to keep from holding his nose. David took a coin from his pocket and gave it to the Indian. It was a wedge-shaped quarter of a dollar, but then all silver was alike to an Indian.

"Very well, my friend," he said. "I'll go on alone. It can't be far to the river, anyhow."

"Not far," assented the Indian. "One sleep." He shook hands with David solemnly, then turned back on the trail.

David addressed himself to the crossing and soon emerged on the other side wringing wet to his belt. He struck out on the trail immediately; here, at any rate, it was clearly defined by the imprints of horses' hoofs. The trouble was that trails had a habit in this country of forking and the unguided traveler might as well toss up to decide which fork to take. David had not gone five miles before difficulty confronted him in the shape of three forks, no one of which seemed more traveled than the rest. The east fork, he reasoned, probably led toward the Creek summer villages, and the west fork toward the Mississippi; probably at Bar-rancas à Margot. That meant that the middle fork should lead toward the Tennessee River.

David followed the middle fork with some misgivings. He had lost enough time from his pursuit of Daniel Strong

and was eager to catch him before he reached the settlements on the Cumberland River. Matters such as this that lay between them were best settled in the wilderness. Thinking of Daniel Strong, David had discovered, was bad for his spirits and the very fact that for ten days he had done little else but think of the minister made his spirits very low indeed.

For a while in the Natchez country, David had thought that he had shaken free from the wretched regrets and bitterness that had haunted him for well over two years. He had been ready to return to settled life as a useful, law-abiding citizen, but the discovery that Daniel Strong had robbed him of Starr had rekindled the fires of bitterness. The old sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach was back too, the same sensation that seemed to come to him whenever he met the minister or thought of him much. It was not a bellyache—just an all-gone feeling as if he was in for a power of trouble. A vision came back to him of the two Germans and Daniel Strong kneeling on the cabin floor while the latter prayed for God to pour conviction on David's soul. Perhaps this was what the preacher meant by conviction.

David roused from his abstraction. The sun was at his back now and he sensed that it had been for some time. He stopped to ponder. The trail was trending toward the southeast, and though there was a chance that it would presently veer toward the north it might be wiser for him to retrace his steps to the forks and try again. An Indian stepped into the path. David looked around and saw that he was surrounded.

"White man drop gun," ordered the warrior in front of him.

David meekly obeyed. He was thinking that Old Tom would have been ashamed of any grandson of his that

deliberately walked into a nest of Injuns. A man picked up the gun and relieved him of knife and tomahawk. His hands were tied loosely behind his back.

"Come," said the leader.

That night they slept in their hunting camp. After supper David's hands and feet were tied to a half-trimmed sapling pole and the Creeks disposed themselves about the fire in such a manner that its smudge would keep the mosquitoes from their faces. The disappointed mosquitoes settled on David's face in a cloud and it was not ten minutes before he was in agony. Anything was better than this slow torture, he decided, and he began an angry and blasphemous tirade with the intention of keeping his captors awake until they allowed him some relief. But he had not reckoned on one possibility. A dirty rag was thrust into his mouth and a bandage tied around the lower part of his face. Thus completely immobilized David spent the night without a moment of sleep, wallowing his face in the weeds to try to keep the mosquitoes away.

It seemed a miracle to him that he was still a rational being when the first streaks of dawn appeared in the sky and he was cut loose by the savages and given a little bear meat and hominy for breakfast. Their hunt was apparently over, for the horses were quickly loaded with bear hides and meat and the company set out on the southeast trail.

That night they camped at a plantation that boasted a straggling orchard of apple and peach trees and a bottom covered with rapidly maturing corn. A white man strolled up from an unkempt cabin with a broken down veranda. His long lean frame, bold eyes, and tobacco stained mouth brought back to David his experiences with the Mingo battalion on the march from Braddock's Field to Pittsburgh.

"How are ye, Bob Hargus?" said David.

The man examined the prisoner with quickened interest.

"I'm afraid ye got th' advantage o' me, stranger," he said. "I don't seem ter reco'nize ye."

"It's no wonder, the way the 'skeetoos been treating my face," answered David. "I'm David Braddee, of McKee's Rocks."

"Shore 'nough?" exclaimed Hargus. "I 'member ye now. What you doin' here?"

"Maybe you can tell *me*," said David. "These Injuns just grunt when I try to talk to 'em. I thought the Creeks were at peace with the United States."

"Wall, mebbe ye could call it a armed peace," answered Hargus. "Mebbe they take ye fer a Tennessean. They ain't never at peace with them, really, though the old men try ter keep young bloods from doin' too much raidin'. They don't want the same treatment Nolichucky Jack Sevier's been givin' the Cherokee."

"Well, tell them I'm a Pennamite, not a Tennessean," said David.

Hargus spoke to the chief at some length, then turned back to David.

"May do ye some good," he said. "Ye'll have ter wait'll ye git ter Tukhatchee ter tell. Thet's their capital town in this country."

"How does it come they let *you* live here?"

"Wall, now, I reckon the aw-spices I come under had somethin' ter do with thet. When I skipped out o' Washin'ton County in '94 jist two jumps ahead o' Hamilton's melishy army. I come down to N'Awleens an' then acrost ter Pinsecoly. Thar I fell in with a Tory trader name o' Dick Penburne among the Creeks an' I reckon thet's why I ain't had no trouble. I got me a squaw an' a fambly now an' this plantation's better nor the one I left in Washin'ton County."

"What's become of Sal?"

"Sal? Hell, I dunno—can't say I keer. She was might' nigh as big a pistilence ter me as the gov'mint axcise. I'm right glad now the whiskey boys didn't win the argymint. I got me my own still now an' I'm a larnin' how ter make a right good likker out o' carn."

Here was a philosopher for you, thought David. No loss without some gain. He, David Braddee, could have saved himself a lot of misery by having cultivated a little of the same philosophy.

"Have you heard of a Methody preacher named Daniel Strong, hereabouts?" asked David.

"Daniel Strong? I dunno. Hold on, thar. Seems ter me Dick Penburne when he was hyar t'other day did mintion somethin' about a Methody preacher bein' out east som'eres. I don't rightly ricollect anythin' more."

"Is that the same Dick Penburne that used to be around Pittsburgh?" asked David.

"Shore. The same'n unt was in with McKee, an' Girty, an' Elliot. He come down hyar t'ord the end o' the Rivolution with a Creek squaw he'd married. He's a big man hyar now. King Pin they calls him, Injuns an' whites. He's a master at playin' off the whiskerandoes, an' the Tennesseans, an' the Gawgians agin' one another. I do think whin the smoke clars away he's aimin' fer this ter be Burdish territory."

"What do you want?" asked David curiously.

"Oh, I cain't say I keer much. Sense the late ruction back home I 'gun ter think it war a mistake ter lick the Burdish like we done. They war fur enough away so's they couldn't a-harmed us much, but Hamilton's gov'mint war clost enough ter march a army agin us ter take away our stills. 'Pears ter me like the day ain't fur off whin a man cain't git fur enough away from gov'mint ter do as he chooses. Purty soon a man'll have ter knuckle under an' do what

he's told. D'ye know I'm kinda glad I'm a-gittin' up in y'ars. I bin ter Philadelphia an' seen people livin' in rows o' boxes under the blissings o' law an' order, an' it 'pears ter me like a feller doin' as he chooses air a big price ter pay fer a set o' chaney dishes an' the preevilege o' wearin' silk an' broadcloth instid o' buckskin."

"There's a side to what you say," answered David reflectively. Here in the midst of the Creek wilderness another victim of the excise troubles had come to the same conclusion that he himself had reached through years of travail. The only difference was that Bob Hargus proposed to avoid the inevitable as long as he could while David Braddee had planned to go back to civilization to wrestle with the problem.

That night the Creeks, probably because of Hargus's intercession, allowed David a place in their smudge and he was able to obtain a little of the sleep he needed. Toward evening of the next day as they neared Tukhatchee they announced their success with a great banging of guns that brought out all the stay-at-homes to praise their skill at hunting and to jostle the prisoner and dig their sticks into his ribs. The village was a miserable affair of stick and mud houses and open-sided huts with cornstalk roofs. The central square was bounded by log ceremonial houses; David's hands were untied and he was thrown into one of these, while the villagers gathered in the square to eat bears' flesh and probably to argue on the fate of the prisoner. In spite of the noise, however, David felt a profound relief at being able to chafe his swollen limbs and then sink into a slumber such as he had not experienced for weeks.

In the morning, soon after he had eaten, David was haled into the village square. A hundred armed men were seated around the open space and behind them stood the women and children. A yell of what he took to be bloodthirsty

anticipation greeted David's appearance. He was led to the opposite side of the square and halted before a log on which was seated a white man of perhaps fifty years of age whose dark, bold features and hard, cold eyes denoted a person of authority. He was dressed in white breeches and a scarlet coat of semimilitary cut; his hair was carefully brushed and tied, and a gold laced hat lay on the log beside him.

The man eyed David with a cold disinterest that seemed to bode ill for the next stage of the proceedings.

"What's your name?" he demanded suddenly.

"David Braddee."

"Where are you from?"

"McKee's Rocks. That's near Pittsburgh."

A glint of interest appeared in the man's face, then vanished. He spoke rapidly to the villagers and they received his words with grunts of what may have been disappointment.

"What are you doing down here?" said the white man presently.

"I piloted a boatload of flour to Orleans," answered David. "I was on my way home."

"Braddee," said the man reflectively. "Who was your father?"

"Matt Braddee," said David.

The trader spoke to the Indians again and a heated argument arose between two factions. The man left the tribesmen to their argument and turned back to David. He indicated a place beside him.

"Sit down here," he said. David obeyed.

"What's become of Tom Braddee?" asked the trader.

"He was taken to Philadelphia after the insurrection," answered David. "He died at Braddee's Sleep on the way home."

The man's face wore an air of abstraction, as if he was

brooding over the past. "Tom Braddee was the best man I ever knew, bar none," he said, as if speaking to himself.

"You must be Dick Penburne," said David.

"You've heard of me?"

"I couldn't have spent my life with Old Tom Braddee without having heard of you," answered David dryly. "And I'm not likely to forget the name in a hurry for another reason. It was your son, Jack Penburne, that sentenced me to prison in Philadelphia."

Dick Penburne smiled for the first time, but there was something unpleasantly sardonic in the expression. "So Jack is taking a whirl at suppressing rebellion," he said. "Curious how life spins the wheel. And how is Jack these days?"

"Plump as a Quaker's cook," answered David, "and smug as the devil with a preacher's soul on his fork."

The King Pin's smile became warmer. "You're in a bad spot, young fellow," he said.

David glanced around the circle of hostile eyes. "It looks that way," he said unemotionally. "What is it now? Fire?"

"No, not this time. It might have been if you'd been a Tennessean, but fortunately for you I've been able to vouch that you're a Pennsylvanian and the grandson of a friend of mine."

"I should think that would make it all the safer to burn me," David pointed out.

"I suppose it should by white man's logic," answered the King Pin, "but Creeks have more honor. They haven't quite absorbed the idea of there being a United States and look on themselves only as being at war with Tennessee and Georgia."

"I hope the side with honor wins out," observed David.

"It will," answered Penburne confidently. He turned back to the Indians for a while.

"The young men insist that they are at least entitled to

some sport for their trouble," he said presently. "I think you'll have to fight a bear."

"A bear? What with?"

"A knife probably. It's great sport."

"For the audience," said David dubiously.

Dick Penburne looked at him steadily for a moment. "The young warriors," he said, "sometimes do it simply to show how brave they are."

"Well, if they can do it, I can," said David with an elaborate show of indifference. "What if I win?"

"You'll be allowed to go where you choose. Maybe you'd prefer to settle here."

David shook his head. "I've got business elsewhere," he said. "Can you tell me where the Reverend Daniel Strong is?"

"Yes, he was on the Coosa a few days ago."

"Did he have to fight a bear?"

Dick Penburne laughed. "No, he was fortunate enough to fall in with me north of Mobile. The Indians wouldn't bother him anyhow. They think he's crazy."

Crazy like a fox, thought David. Apparently the council had reached a decision, for an old man decked out with red paint and copper and silver ornaments arose and spoke to Dick Penburne.

"Yes," said the trader, "it's the bear. Come with me."

He rose and clapped on his gold laced hat, then led the way beyond the village to a stout wooden cage that opened into a kind of narrow corral. David climbed the fence while the villagers surrounded the enclosure yipping like terriers with the excitement. A brave handed David a knife.

"Let him hug you if you can't do any better," counseled the King Pin, "but don't lose any time sticking that knife in his ribs or belly. He'll claw you to death if you're slow."

David felt the snugness of his broad money belt against

his belly and was thankful for that much. He remembered a tale of a hunter who had gouged out a bear's eyes and wondered if it was true.

"The bear's always kept hungry," Penburne comforted him. "That's in your favor. He won't be as strong as he would if he were well fed."

David flashed the trader a sardonic smile; it looked as if the man actually was set to enjoy the battle. The grating before the pen was rising slowly and some young bucks were prodding the animal with poles. With a growl that was almost a roar the beast shambled through the opening and peered about with angry, bloodshot eyes. A pole dug into its flank with vicious force and the Indians scattered from the fence as the bear turned angrily toward them. A pole stabbed at it from the other side and the beast turned again. Then it caught sight of David.

David stood with his feet apart and the knife grasped firmly in his right hand. That bear would be nearly as tall as he was. For the first time in his life he felt frightened by an impending combat and he knew that his face was as white as milkweed down. He wondered with an odd quirk of whimsy if the creature's belly felt as full of lead as his did, and if Daniel Strong would admit that a bear could be under conviction.

Suddenly the bear was in motion toward him, then in the next moment it had risen on its hind feet and thrown itself against him, its paws spread wide to grasp him. David thrust with his knife and tried to withdraw it but the blade snapped off close to the handle. One of these damn' trade knives, thought David desperately; if he had only asked for his own. He heard the suddenly heightened yells of the spectators; the bear's breath was in his face and he could see its cruel pig-eyes glaring at him.

Then the bear's nose was between David's teeth and his

thumbs were pressing on the creature's eyes. The eyes both popped out at the same instant and David felt the bear's hug relax. The next moment he was free and staggering to the fence while the bear was rushing blindly about the corral roaring with pain and terror. David clung drunkenly to the fence and avoided the blind rushes for a minute that seemed to stretch into hours, then the bear was lying on its side gasping out its life. The broken knife had done its work tardily but effectively.

The King Pin helped David over the fence. "It was a grand fight, lad," he said. "You've got Tom Braddee's spunk in ye. That touch of gouging out the bear's eyes will make your story a legend in another generation."

David leaned against the fence. He felt weak and giddy and there were warm spots on his body as if the sun were striking through holes in his clothing. The next thing he knew he was lying under a shelter and two squaws were swabbing at the spots that were now burning like fire. One of them rubbed the winespot on his belly, then emitted a guttural cry and drew her companion's attention to the tomahawk-shaped mark. His blood-stained money belt hung on a peg above him and he could see that it bore long scratches where the bear's claws had ripped across it.

Dick Penburne stood at the foot of the bunk. He was a big man, David noticed for the first time, and he carried himself with the dignity of breeding and self-assurance; that would be one reason why he was called King Pin, probably a pun on King Penburne. He must be older than he looked, it occurred to David suddenly, for he had been a contemporary of Old Tom's in the Ohio Indian trade before Brad-dock's defeat more than forty years before.

"How are ye feeling, lad?" inquired the trader.

"Like I'd had a fight with a bear," said David dryly.

The trader smiled. "You proved yourself today," he said.

"You can have anything in Tukhatchee that you want, not forgetting a wife and a plantation."

"All I ask," said David, "is a chance to let these infernal scratches heal and then leave to go."

"You'll have no more difficulty with the Indians," said Penburne, "and as for the scratches, just lie still and do what the women tell you and you'll be around in a few days."

Chapter 61

THE KING PIN LEFT TUCKHATCHEE THE NEXT DAY AND AT parting bestowed on David as a parting gift a necklace made of the claws of the bear he had killed. Though the trader was gone, David did not suffer for attention. As he lay on his bunk, however, waiting for his scratches to mend he began to examine with seriousness the phenomenon that Daniel Strong called conviction. It was, he found, the accusation of his conscience that he had been sinful. The dissoluteness of his life was against him he now saw clearly for the first time, but beyond that and more fundamental was the complex of traits centering in self-will which he had deliberately cultivated in defiance of the laws of God and man.

Then, as if the trader had sensed the reason for David's haste, word arrived from Dick Penburne that Daniel Strong was heading for Nashville. David rose immediately from his bed and prepared to set off for the Tennessee River. Conviction or no conviction, he decided grimly, no man was going to interfere with David Braddee's business and go scot-free.

And yet, as he rode along between the two youths who had volunteered to act as his guides, David found his mind sorely harassed. What of his duty toward man, demanded his conscience? Was it right that he should be seeking the blood of the man who had saved his life? He had given over his vendetta against the law, was it not meet that he should as well become an upholder of the law? What of the future of his own soul? Was there a hell too deep for a

man like him, guilty of sins without number and now planning to add cold-blooded murder to the list? What of his duty toward the God who had made him, who had brought him through a hundred perils and still gave him breath while he sought the life of his benefactor?

From some cranny of his mind came the words, "Be ye reconciled to God," and as he rode every clump of his horse's hoofs seemed to echo the refrain, "be ye—recon—ciled to God, be ye—recon—ciled to God." Blacker and blacker became the cloud of David's conscience, and heavier and heavier the weight of his guilt. He wondered dully that the horse was able to stand the weight both of rider and sin. He cursed himself for a fool. What better law could there be than the one he had known all his life? An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a man's life for a wrong or an insult. This was the law he had known and it had proven good. Without it men were sheep, fit only to be torn by the wolves.

They came to the crossing of the Tennessee in the evening and the two Creeks helped him build a raft of long poles tied together by grapevines. Early the next morning David lashed to the raft "Old Katy," and his blanket, hunting shirt, war bag, brogans, and bag of provisions, then pushed it into the water. He shook the hands of the guides. They had been among the party that had captured him, but David perceived by the arch-solemnity of their farewell that they had developed a vast admiration for him. He envied them their freedom from the darts of the white man's God. Bravery and self-reliance were their gods, and rightly so.

"Keep your chin up," David admonished them, and they grunted approval though they did not understand what he said.

He crouched on the raft and the two Indians pushed him from the shore. With the aid of a pole David worked his

way into the current, then took up his makeshift paddle. The raft was light and narrow and he balanced himself carefully as he paddled. A sand spit a half mile downstream was the logical landing and David headed for it. The dark, clear current tossed the craft roughly and David sat down and spread his legs so that his bare feet dragged in the water on each side. The current gripped the raft like a powerful hand and carried it swiftly along in midstream. He measured the distance to the sandbar and decided that he might make it.

"Paddle like the devil in hell," he grunted to himself and bent to the task. Suddenly a boil caught the frail craft and David lost his balance. The next moment he was struggling to keep himself afloat while the raft was being swept irrevocably beyond his reach. The weight of his money belt, hunting knife, and tomahawk dragged him down, but he grimly refused to part with them. He had worn the knife and tomahawk for just such an emergency as this; without them there wouldn't be much use in gaining the shore.

The angry water tumbled him over and over, as if determined to drag him down. Every breath was hard won against the fury of the waves, and yet inch by inch David worked his way toward the northern shore. Never in his life had there been such a call upon his strength and skill, and for a while it looked as if his heritage of weakness from the fight with the bear would yet prove his death.

Suddenly, almost as if the eddy had tired of playing with him and had tossed him aside, he found that he was in quiet water. He dropped his feet and touched bottom. Hazily, as he staggered toward the shore, he wondered if he could have lifted his feet again if the water had been beyond his depth. Then he was lying with his tongue in a strip of clean reddish sand, panting with complete exhaustion.

Presently he raised his face from the sand and spat the grains from his tongue. The world beyond the waste of water was green and the birds were singing in the bushes; the sky was still blue and flecked with riding puffs of white. What had he done that he deserved to be spared for this, thought David? Was it in order that he might continue to hunt down Daniel Strong and murder him? He was conscious again of the black burden, strangling him as if he were back in the river. David struggled to his knees in the sand and lifted his hands weakly to the sky that it had seemed he would never see again.

"Oh, God, if there is a God," he groaned, "save my poor soul."

For one awful moment the world and all that was in it seemed to stand still, then swiftly and silently the burden of guilt left, and in its place there came an ineffable flood of peace. It was as if he had been swept and garnished and purified within. The words of Christ to Nicodemus came to him; born again—that was it. He was as free from guilt and sin as the newly-born babe. Slowly he rose to his feet with his hands stretched up and the tears rolling down his shining face. This was the moment of regeneration, the beginning of perfect harmony with God and nature. Like a lost traveler emerging by accident from the dark woods to the pleasant settled lands, he had stumbled upon the delectable country.

David never knew how long he stood there. Presently, he came down to earth and began to consider his position. It was not that he doubted his ability to make his way safely to the Cumberland settlements—that would be a scant hundred and fifty miles—but without his food he could not make the haste his business required. Then it came over him that his business had changed. Now, instead of seeking Daniel Strong's life, he wanted to tell the minister

how he loved him and beg his forgiveness for his late hatred.

David was turning upstream to reach the trace when a voice seemed to speak to him audibly.

"Go downstream," it said.

David hesitated for a moment. Voices such as this had never formed a part of his conception of the cosmos.

"Go downstream," it said again.

David turned and worked his way along the drift-strewn bank. Just above the next curve in the river his raft was caught in the branches of a fallen tree. He plunged into the foam laden water and drew the raft ashore; every piece that he had lashed to it was intact. His first act then was to obey a newly implanted impulse by falling upon his knees and thanking God. When he arose he spread his property on the bushes of the bank to dry in the sun.

It was almost noon when he resumed his journey but he seemed to cover the ground with a vigor that he had never possessed before. As a matter of fact the trail was a succession of bumpy hills, canebrakes, and sloughs filled with soupy mud, but to David it seemed that his feet might have been winged, so lightly did he move. The world had a freshness, a vitality, a pantheistic innocence that he had never noticed before. It was as if nature had taken voices and was echoing the praise of God that was welling up in his heart. The bright-winged warblers on each side of the trail took startled flight and David became conscious that he had been shouting, "Alleluia." Why had he said that? He remembered finally that he had heard it from the Methodist movers on the beach at Pittsburgh—and yes, he had read it somewhere in the Bible—the refrain of the heavenly hosts.

Phrases and disconnected passages from the Bible came back to him—The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork—Under his wings shalt thou rest—Lo, I am with you alway. Yes, there did seem

to be a Presence beside him and in him; he even found himself talking to it as he walked. At first it seemed to be Daniel Strong, but before long he knew by the burning of his heart within him that no mere mortal could be molded in the loving sweetness and tenderness of this Presence. Then his eyes were opened and for the first time he knew the Christ.

He stopped and cut a section from a sapling, split it in two, then laid Daniel Strong's wet Bible between the halves and lashed the ends tightly together. The press was rude enough and doubtless the glue had melted away, but at any rate the book might be preserved until he could get it rebound.

There was not a breath of wind as he walked and from west of the zenith the sun looked down and drew the dampness from swamp and forest in a sultry haze. As the afternoon wore on black and white clouds began to drift above him and in the west a threatening field of black appeared, drawing closer and closer, yet not deigning to pounce upon the savannas where he walked. The hills and trees and canebrakes stood out with startling distinctness against the white and black of the sky, and David had a sense of his miniscule importance as displayed against the forces of primitive nature.

A cool wind puffed against his left cheek and chilled the rolling sweat, then passed on to take crackling homage of the tall yellow cane. A jagged streak of lightning flashed along the darkly banked west and a clap of thunder rolled across the corridors of the storm. Another gust of wind came upon him, stronger than the first. The lightning flashed again and the dark clouds seemed to stoop from the sky behind a driving sheet of rain. The trees tossed their tops in wild alarm and the cane bowed itself to the earth before the sudden fury of the tempest. It was upon him now,

nature in her sublimest and most terrible mood; roaring like all her beasts in one, tossing the groaning forest trees with the cold blast from her nostrils, and riving them asunder with the swift strokes of her lightning.

David braced himself against a fallen tree and lifted his face to the full fury of the storm. A new kind of awe filled his breast as he watched. This was the handiwork of the God he had come to know, the sport and diversion of his elements. He felt himself the humblest of the creatures of God, and yet, withal, the best beloved. This was the God who had reached down to lift him from the angry waters and set his feet in a new path. This was the God whose presence was in him and beside him and all about him. There, with the rain and the wind beating against him he lifted his arms and his voice in a glad, fierce shout of exultation and praise, careless that the wind snatched the words from his mouth as soon as they were uttered.

A band of light appeared in the west and swiftly broadened along the horizon; the rain dwindled to scattered drops and passed on with the dark cloud that had borne it.

"When I speak, the four winds heed my voice, and the elements hearken to my call;

"The clouds ascend to cool my brow, and the rivers lave my dusty feet."

It was the old boast that he had made famous and terrible on the river and he had shouted it as unconsciously as the clouds had given their rain. But it was strangely fitting, he suddenly realized. All that he had boasted was now true—true because of the Presence that was with him and made him rub his shoulders on the stars. Far in the west the lowering sun appeared and in the east was set the seven-hued bow of its benediction. And as he watched, David felt that its benediction was in a special measure his. For this was the day of his salvation.

Chapter 62

ON ONE OF THE CAMEL-HUMPED HILLS BETWEEN DUCK River and the Cumberland, David paused to listen. From far ahead of him there came on the breeze a sound, a sound that might have been one of the myriad voices of nature but that seemed to have something of the human timbre in it. Panting with the exertion David ran to the next hill and paused again to listen. It was clearer now. Even a few words came back to him.

"How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord."

The wind shifted and the words became meaningless, but David knew that his search was nearly over. The voice was the voice of Daniel Strong.

David crashed down a hill and saw the minister standing at the bottom with his horse's reins in his hand for the hills were so steep and the stones so sharp, that riding was impracticable over long stretches of the trace. David halted and looked at Daniel Strong for a moment without saying a word. The preacher's homely countenance seemed beautiful to him, lighted as it was by the same Presence that had come with him from the Tennessee River. Tears were in David's eyes as he lifted his hands and stepped forward.

"Brother Strong," he said, "God has saved my soul."

The minister's face showed his relief. "Well, praise the Lord," he shouted. "God gave me the witness two years ago that my prayer for you would be answered." He grasped David's hands and smiled. "God answers prayer sometimes in a moment when we least expect it. Do you know, I thought for a minute you had come to kill me?"

"That was why I started after you," replied David, "but God caught up with me at the Tennessee."

"You understand then—it was my duty to warn Mrs. Thorne against you."

"Yes, I know it now."

"And you bear me no malice?"

"None whatever, Brother Strong. But I still love her."

The minister searched David's face keenly, but he wisely refrained from censure. "These be things, Brother David," he said, "that even the grace of God cannot cure. The remedy lies within ourselves."

As they walked they talked of many things, but chiefly of the wonders of the spiritual realm. Like the chief gardener of a nobleman's estate, Daniel Strong endeavored to show the newcomer its exotic blooms and rare fruits, the hidden beauties of its arbors and sylvan retreats, and its gravelled walks wherein the Master strolled in the cool of the evening. It was as if David had passed into a new dimension and found a world to which he had been blind, but which had existed around him all the while. Here in the peace of forgiven sins he found the answer to all his problems—or rather those problems became unimportant in the light of his new discovery.

"It seems almost impossible," he said to his mentor, "that there could have existed such a short cut to this delectable country without the whole world having found it."

Daniel Strong cast him a quick, keen look. "Brother David," he said, "I would not destroy your illusions, yet you must learn that the world does not believe in this delectable country. We who preach it are wild fanatics or babbling fools."

"But surely," protested David, "if people were told the story simply and calmly they would believe."

"That is the mission of the ministry, Brother David—to

point the road so simply that the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein. How long, Brother David, after you heard the call before you heeded it?"

David harked back to his first contact with the gospel on the river bank at Pittsburgh, through his contact with Daniel Strong on the Washington Road, to his Bible reading days in prison.

"But I had no one to point the road," he said.

"I tried the first time I met you," replied the minister, "and I left my guidebook with you."

David was silent for a moment. "I still cannot comprehend," he said presently. "If only I had been told the peace and rapture that passes all understanding—"

"That is just it," the minister broke in. "It passes all understanding. The world cannot believe it."

They had left the great wilderness behind and, riding the gray horse in turn, had reached the first of the settlements a few miles south of Nashville. Daniel Strong, whose turn it was to walk, looked up at the earnest young convert.

"Brother David," he said, "there are men gathered yonder in the village before us. Tell them in your own way about the delectable country you have found and how you came there. There may be those hungering to find this same experience."

The men lounging about the general store saw the little party coming in from the trace; their attention was fixed on the auburn-haired young hunter on the huge gray horse. His hands were lifted as he rode toward them and tears were streaming from his eyes.

"Though your sins be as scarlet," he was saying, "they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool . . ."

* * * * *

As he journeyed into Kentucky with Daniel Strong to keep the appointments that had been advertised months in advance, it gradually dawned on David that he was serving an apprenticeship in the calling that from henceforth was to occupy his life. With sublime faith in his own prescience, the minister had taken that for granted from the moment that David had overtaken him on the trace, and day after day he devoted himself to the instruction and molding of the neophyte, grounding him in the tenets of Arminian theology and drilling him in the clichés of Methodism. David's alert intelligence made him an apt student and imitator; it was not many days before he knew as much about the technique of sermonizing as his instructor. Mastery of the practice was scarcely slower in coming to him.

The minister had not been long in discovering that David possessed a singing voice of remarkable sweetness and clarity, and a part of their time as they journeyed was devoted to the words and tunes of the Methodist hymnals. David learned them rapidly and it was not long before he was opening meetings with one or more hymns, and Daniel Strong, as he watched the young man sing, sometimes with tears streaming from his eyes, knew that David's singing led more sinners to repentance than his preaching.

It was not in Daniel Strong, however, to be jealous. He was one of that remarkable band of men who, whatever the modern view of their motives or their beliefs may be, laid in the last decades of the eighteenth century the foundations of a church whose influence on the new nation was to be incalculable.

In spite of the inhibitions with which Methodism hedged the daily lives of its adherents, it was in a large measure more suited to the equalitarian frontier than was Calvinism with its predestinarianism. Methodism taught that salvation was free to all and that the individual could choose for

himself whether he would be saved or damned. It offered to the poor man also, the hope of an after life in a glorious heaven whose streets were paved with gold, and oftentimes by implication, consigned the wealthy man to eternal fire. Did not the scripture say that it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God?

To these, Methodism added an appeal that could not fail to attract the drama-starved people of the frontier; the ministers cast out devils from the sin-convinced; authentic fire descended from heaven and rested like tongues of flame upon the heads of believers; their power to throw their hearers into trances was well authenticated, and anyone who risked himself within earshot of a Methodist service laid himself open to the experience willy-nilly.

Rough and self-educated though Daniel Strong was, yet he possessed a force, a humor, and a knowledge of western life and psychology that made him a power in the wilderness. The first time that David heard him preach he stood in open-mouthed wonder. The ugly face and cavernous eyes were filled with a rough camaraderie as he spun homely phrases and cracked jokes that kept the audience rocking with laughter. Then, as a skillful organist gradually introduces a change of theme, the serious note began to creep into the discourse. Parables and scripture quotations were dropped into the listeners' ears, and presently, with all the stops of his eloquence pulled out, the minister was pouring the gospel of total damnation upon the heads of his trembling audience. Then what a wailing there was and falling upon the ground as the repentant sought God with tears and heart-broken entreaties and terrified bellowings, while Daniel Strong moved among them with flailing arms and terrible words of doom.

David found himself listening to the sermon and its

aftermath with a return of that old sensation of having a midriff loaded with lead. Even the Presence that had come with him from the Tennessee seemed to be gone and in its place there dwelt a curious mixture of foreboding and disapproval that lasted for hours. When he spoke of it to Daniel Strong the minister gave him a quick glance of approval.

"It is the burden for souls," he said.

Then it was David's turn to preach and because he was earnest in following the course he had chosen he tried to preach as his mentor had. The sermon fell flat; the congregation broke up with unconcealed disappointment, and David admitted to himself that he had been lamentably unperturbed by his own effort.

"We must each of us be ourselves," counselled the minister. "Preach as David Braddee would—not as Daniel Strong."

David listened to Strong's next sermon with a return of the disapproval he had felt at first of the method of shaking sinners over hell. The next day it was David's turn again. The Presence within him seemed to put words in his mouth as he stood on a stump in a clearing and told the few score rough pioneers in his audience of the delectable country and the plain and easy road thereto, while the tears streamed from his eyes and drew answering torrents from the eyes of his listeners. Thus, as if purified in the flood of their repentant tears, a handful of souls found the delectable country, and Daniel Strong organized a Methodist "class" on the spot.

There was, however, one objector, the sour old Methodist on whose farm the meeting had been held.

"Hit ain't no way ter preach," he urged on Daniel Strong. "Shake 'em over hell—thet's the way. Show 'em their sins

till they can't sleep nights. Thar ain't no easy way ter be born inter the kingdom."

The minister tugged at his chin and eyed the recalcitrant with a glint of humor. "We ain't never too old to learn, Brother Darby," he said. "I'll own that Brother Braddee's method is different from mine, but it gets results, and that's what counts. After all, I reckon a baby is born even if it comes into the world easy instead of hard—and it saves a power of wear and tear on the mother, too. Maybe tears is a heap better lubricant than brimstone."

At the crossing of the Kentucky River they found the ferryman to be a giant, long-haired, bewhiskered foreigner whose accent might have been French. The man was openly contemptuous of Methodist ministers. As the flatboat touched the north shore he threw a looped rope over a post, then turned to touch one of Daniel Strong's saddlebags.

"'Ow many poor fool souls you got zare?" he said with a leer.

"Well, at least we don't have yours," replied the minister.

The ferryman spat in the stream. "Bah!" he exclaimed, "I s'ink you one dam' rascal baptize poor fools for zere money. I s'ink I see how you like baptize."

He reached for the preacher with the evident intention of throwing him in the river. The next thing he knew he was in the river himself and the minister was holding him by the hair and sousing him generously in the water.

"I baptize thee," said Daniel Strong, "in the name of the devil whose child thou art."

He held the man above the surface for a moment. "Will you come to meeting at Roger's Grove?" he demanded.

The ferryman spluttered an angry negative and was swaddled around in the water for another spell.

"How about it?" said the minister as he brought him up again.

"I come," agreed the gasping Frenchman.

True to his promise the ferryman appeared at Roger's Grove. He listened with sober countenance as Daniel Strong preached and was the first to go forward at the call for seekers after God. After the meeting he sought out the two preachers.

"I want you go home wiz me," said the Frenchman, touching his breast with an eloquent gesture. "My wife she mus' know, too, w'at zis is I got here."

His name, it presently appeared, was O'Day—a name whose curiously Hibernian sound was explained when David saw the wife. It was his foster sister Gertie, and the Frenchman was his brother-in-law, Hercule Odet.

David decided to remain for a few days with his relatives, but the next day he accompanied Daniel Strong as far as Lexington and left his Bible with a bookbinder. The pressing and rebinding, he learned, would cost as much as a new Bible, but for sentimental reasons he preferred to keep the old one. Strong went on to other appointments in eastern Kentucky and Tennessee and, though he urged his young friend to accompany him, David refused.

"I feel that I must first preach the gospel in Louisville," said David. "I must bear witness for Christ in the place where I did so much to grieve him."

Thereupon Daniel Strong emptied his saddlebags of books, passed them over to David, and after arranging to meet him at the Philadelphia conference in October, set out upon his eastward journey.

While he waited for his Bible to be rebound, David preached with such effect in the vicinity of Odet's ferry that there were enough converts to form a society. Though he had no official right to do so, David organized them as he had seen Daniel Strong do and appointed Hercule Odet class leader. Then, with an admonition that they seek the sanc-

tion of a regular minister as soon as possible, David set out for Louisville.

No sooner was it known in the towns around the falls of the Ohio that the notorious David Braddee had become a Methodist preacher than he found people flocking to his sermons on the outskirts of Louisville. The Methodists of the town called him the "weeping prophet," for he rarely sang or prayed or preached without the tears coursing down his weather-reddened cheeks. He did not beat the Bible that he held in his hand nor scream as the other Methodist preachers did; he merely stood with his head thrown back and a holy light upon his face, and talked of the love of God and of the road to the delectable country. Even those who had judged a preacher by the vigor of his delivery and the amount of brimstone in his sermons yielded him a puzzled respect.

There was one citizen, however, who cherished his grudge against the one-time boatman; so it was that one afternoon at the close of his sermon David found himself taken into custody for his assault on Monsieur Albret the previous January. The magistrate was prone to be merciful but there was little he could do against the reluctant testimony of the witnesses and David's own admission of guilt, so he handed down a sentence of a month in the town jail. A crowd made up of sympathizers, scoffers, and the merely curious watched him locked up to begin his sentence. The few prisoners already in the jail greeted him with derisive cries of "alleluia" and "praise the Lord," and some of the loungers outside echoed them.

David went to the window and looked down through the iron bars at the rough crowd of loafers and red-shirted boatmen. These, he thought, were the men to whom he had come to preach the gospel. What better opportunity than

this? With a silent prayer for divine guidance David began to sing.

How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in his excellent word!
What more can he say than to you he hath said,
To you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?

There was an uneasy movement in the crowd and David saw that certain of the loudest scoffers were stealing away. The men behind him in the prison room were silent.

Fear not, I am with thee, O be not dismayed,
For I am thy God, and will still give thee aid;
I'll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand,
Upheld by my gracious, omnipotent hand.

When he had finished with the last stanza David began speaking. Never had the Presence within him been so meltingly sweet as in that hour and never had he spoken so persuasively of the way of the delectable country. Every evening after that, David preached from the window of the jail and there was always a crowd to listen to the "weeping prophet" who had once been a notorious gouge-fighter. Monsieur Albret came often and stood listening with his arms folded and a sneer on his face. Though David prayed that he might have his revenge in the Frenchman's conversion, yet it was not till a year later that he heard that the object had finally been accomplished and that Monsieur Albret had dismissed his prostitutes, emptied his whiskey into the street, and announced that henceforth his tavern was strictly sober and Methodistic.

Chapter 63

IT WAS LATE OCTOBER WHEN DAVID FINALLY TRAVERSED THE familiar road along Chartiers Creek and came to the crossing near the Pancake farm at McKee's Rocks. As he ascended the road from the creek he felt a moist muzzle in the palm of his hand and turned to see Barney, Old Tom's black and tan dog, looking up at him with gravely affectionate eyes. Just as if he had been gone a few hours instead of almost a year.

David walked across the flats with old memories tugging at his heart. Far across the fields was McKee's Rocks with the Indian mound on its top and the cemetery in which Old Tom lay buried. A lot had happened since that May day when they had laid the old man to rest—much that he would have approved and much that he would have disapproved, but all of which his curiously contradictory morality would have excused. Except, perhaps, for David's having left Starr behind. Old Tom would never have approved of that. David looked across the creek at a stretch of twenty acres that he had once dreamed of taking for his share of the farm. He had even planned the house he would build there some day high up on the hill above any danger of flood—a long cabin with a stone fireplace at one end, one of those new iron cooking stoves at the other, and two or three low rooms above for storage and sleeping quarters.

David quickened his step and old Barney looked around in some surprise, then stepped out with a senile attempt at

spryness. Thomasina was in the barnyard scattering corn to the chickens.

"It's about time you showed up, George Pancake," she began, then looked up. "Davy!" she cried. "Davy, my boy, my boy."

She was in his arms and the dams of her eyes were loosened, probably for the first time in her life, David thought with a little awe. Strange how she had only sniffled when there had been so many deaths in the family, but cried when he returned to her safe and sound. Presently she held him at arms' length to look at him.

"Mike Fink said he'd left you in Orleans," she said, "then the next thing I knowed, you'd turned Methody preacher."

"Are you disappointed that I'm not to be a lawyer?"

"Disappointed? Lord bless ye, no. This is what pappy would have wanted anyways."

David's eyes rose to the hills across the creek. "Aunt Seena," he said irrelevantly, "will you sell me that east twenty?"

"Sell it?" she exclaimed. "It's yours."

David shook his head. "No, I have money. I'll either buy it or not take it. What do you say to sixty dollars?"

"Sixty dollars? It ain't worth it."

"Yes, it is too, Aunt Seena. Come on—take it. I'm rich."

"Well, you won't be long," Thomasina said, "if you're goin' to be a Methody preacher. I heerd tell they only draw sixty-four dollars a year."

They went inside and David counted out three joes, a half joe, and four dollars, while the Pancake children, grown almost out of recollection, looked on in open-eyed wonder at the sight of so much money.

"We'll go into town tomorrow and get the deed," said Thomasina. She put the money in a copper mug on the mantle. "Dave, did you bring *her* with ye?"

"No," answered David. "How could I?"

Thomasina sniffed. "I plumb forgot you was a Methody," she said, then whirled on him suddenly. "If it ain't for her you want that land," she demanded, "then why air you buyin' it?"

David stared. He had made the purchase without any very definite purpose, but now he saw that deep down inside him he was still planning a home for Starr.

"Well, what do you want of it?" Thomasina reinforced her demand.

"Why," answered David lamely, "I reckon I just want to invest my money. I can't carry it around forever."

The next day David put on his French-tailored blue suit and went into Pittsburgh with the Pancakes. The deed was drawn up, signed, and sealed in the presence of the prothonotary, and George and Thomasina departed to make some purchases and pay some bills with the money. A few minutes later Mr. Beaumont looked up from Terheyden Drew's note.

"This," he said, "is the second draft I have received from Mr. Drew since I paid young Mike Fink the last penny I owed for my Orleans goods. Needless to say, I won't pay it. You'll have to try Mr. Drew again."

"I can't," said David. "He's dead. I heard this summer that he had burned himself in his country home."

"Hm." The merchant reflected for a moment. "I'm afraid you'll never get your money, David. Sounds like bankruptcy to me."

David entered the familiar door to Brackenridge's office. The lawyer looked up absently as he heard David's step, then his face brightened.

"David!" he cried. "You're back at last."

David sank into a chair. In spite of his chagrin at the loss of his money the homely disarray of Brackenridge's office

and the odor of the calfskin bindings warmed his heart with pleasant memories.

"I never thought I'd be so glad to see Pittsburgh again," he said.

The lawyer laid a hand on his knee. "We've missed ye, lad," he said.

David told him about Terheyden Drew and Brackenridge listened with lengthening face. "I'm afraid there's nothing you can do," he said when David had finished. He rummaged in the drawer of his desk and finally drew forth a Philadelphia paper.

"Here it is," he said. "A list of recent business failures. Yes, Terheyden Drew is among them. The government of Louisiana has seized all the assets."

"Well, that's that," said David. "I had planned on stocking a farm and building a house with the money."

Brackenridge looked at him quizzically. "There is a rumor abroad," he said, "that the notorious David Braddee has become a Methodist preacher. That explains my seeming inhospitableness in not offering you a drink of whiskey."

"I did some preaching in Kentucky this fall," said David. "I could scarcely be called a full-fledged preacher, though. I haven't even joined the church."

"Well, if you must be a preacher," said Brackenridge, with the old familiar smile, and there was an undercurrent of sarcasm in his words, "be a Methodist. Take a horse jockey and in two weeks from the jump he is in the pulpit. No need of Latin, Greek, or Hebrew, nor of any commentary or system of divinity. Give him a Bible to thump and all is plain sailing."

His brilliant smile faded and his face became serious. "What of Starr Thorne?" he said quietly.

David's face flamed. "What do you know of us?" he demanded.

"I? I know nothing. It is the women who know these things. They say that you two love each other if ever two young people did."

"But she is married!"

"A child married to a swine!" exclaimed Brackenridge. "A marriage like that is no marriage before God. If you love her it is your duty to save her from it."

David sat numbly trying to think. This view of the case had occurred to him often, yet because of Daniel Strong's disapproval he had dismissed it from his mind as immoral. Yet it had come back to him constantly. He looked up at Brackenridge.

"What does the law say?"

"The law!" blurted Brackenridge. "Who cares about the law! It's against you, of course. But there are times when a man must settle his problems outside the law. If you love her it is your duty to take her from that beast and make a home for her."

An explanation for Brackenridge's strange conduct flashed across David's mind. "Are you sure you're not trying to save me from the Methodist ministry?" he said.

It was the lawyer's turn to color. "I had my whirl at the ministry," he replied, "and I think little of it. I will not deny that in my opinion you are spoiling a good lawyer and statesman to make a second-rate preacher. But that is beside the point."

He hitched his chair closer to David's and lowered his voice. "This spring," he said, "I had occasion to stop overnight in Lancaster and because the best houses were full I put up at the Ram's Head Tavern, Martha England, proprietress. It is a drovers' stand west of the town, with immense pens for the sheep, hogs, and cattle that go through."

"This Martha England," said David, "is Starr Thorne's aunt."

"Exactly," replied Brackenridge. "Have you ever seen her?"

"No."

"Well, you should. And you should talk to the servants around the place. I think it would open your eyes to your rights in the matter."

"What did you learn?"

Brackenridge looked steadily at David. "In Philadelphia I made careful inquiry if it was true," he said. "It was. If you care for Starr you will go and find out for yourself. It is too late now for the law to interfere. She has no defense—unless you will undertake it."

* * * * *

"David," said Daniel Strong, "I want you to meet Brother James Ward."

David shook hands with the stranger with the feeling that he was holding a fish tail. The man was in his fifties, tall and powerfully built and with thin gray hair hanging over his ears in reverend locks. His dewlaps were a rugged pink, his mouth a straight line, and his intensely black eyes were small and boring, with the lids almost flush with cheeks and forehead. He said nothing, but eyed David with a cool contempt that a year before would have put him in some personal danger.

"Brother Ward," continued Daniel Strong, "is one of our presiding elders and is acting as superintendent of the Philadelphia conference because of the illness of Bishop Asbury."

"I have been hearing of your work in Kentucky from Brother Strong," said James Ward weightily.

"It was little enough to do for the Lord," answered David. He told of his imprisonment in Louisville and of the revival

he had led by his preaching from the jail window, and as he talked tears filled his eyes. "I want to go on from there," he concluded, "serving my apprenticeship in the vineyard of the Lord."

James Ward was impressed in spite of himself by David's earnestness and humility. "Brother Braddee," he said, "I want to list you as a standard bearer in the army of the Lord. Will you take the Allegheny Circuit? I warn you that it is the hardest in the conference, both because of the ruggedness of the country and the sinfulness of the people."

David looked at Daniel Strong as if for guidance. "My only experience," he said hesitantly, "is a month with Brother Daniel—and a month in jail."

"A month under Daniel Strong's tutelage," said James Ward brusquely, "is worth three years in a worldly theological school. We'll look on the jail term as a postgraduate course that makes you a fellow with Paul and Silas, who were prisoners for Christ's sake."

"I've only just joined the church."

"It is sufficient. You can be taken into the conference on trial. Will you answer the call of God and accept this appointment in his roster of subalterns?"

"If you think I am worthy, Brother Ward."

"Then you will be appointed to the Allegheny Circuit," said Ward. "Your circuit includes the Allegheny and Kiskiminetas valleys, and there's no law against going farther afield if you choose. It is a fruitful field, Brother Braddee, and the Lord will help you to a great harvest if you will trust him."

The day after the conference had adjourned James Ward spent several hours in pouring advice into the ears of his latest recruit, while Daniel Strong sat by with a faint air of disapproval and put in an occasional word of explanation when he thought the superintendent was getting too

technical. Before the ministers departed Daniel Strong took David aside for a moment.

"Brother David," he said, "I would not gainsay what Brother Ward has told you concerning your conduct in the ministry: I would only say that when you are in doubt you should trust to the Lord and your own horse sense."

* * * * *

The Ram's Head Tavern was a disreputable hole, but its proprietress vied with it in slatterliness. There was a look of such patent cruelty and avarice in her wrinkled old face that David shuddered at the thought of such a delicate creature as Starr having been her slavey. After supper in the greasy taproom David called the old woman aside.

"I am a friend of Mrs. Thorne, your niece," he said. "I thought you might like to hear of her."

The proprietress chewed a snuff soaked twig while her cunning eyes appraised David. He must be rather a nob, she decided, with that stylishly cut blue suit.

"She's Starr Lukas," said the old woman with a touch of venom, "not Mrs. Thorne."

David had been studying Martha England to good effect and he drew out a golden half joe, one of the last of his small store. He tossed it with apparent absent-mindedness, but noted the cupidity in the woman's eyes.

"I have reasons for wishing to know why you say that," he remarked.

Martha England licked her lips. "Well, 'tain't nothing much," she said. "Starr's uncle, Ernest Lukas—he was the brother of my young half-sister's husband—died in Baltimore and left a sum of money to Starr. The first I knew of it, this Captain Thorne appeared and told me that he had aided in drawing up the will and made me a proposition that he marry Starr. Well, he was a personable chap

and I thought Starr couldn't do any better and anyhow she'd need a man to look out for her money, so I consented."

The story was a deal too smooth, thought David. It was clear enough that Thorne had given her a share in the estate in order to gain her favor.

"Well, Captain Thorne took her to Philadelphia and bought her a power of pretties—silk stockings, and dresses, and cloaks, even a riding mask—and went to the theater and the balls. They stopped off here, when they came back through on their way to Pittsburgh. That's the last I've ever heard of 'em, except what the drovers passing through tell me."

"Thorne lost most of what he had in bad investments," said David. "He took the rest and went to Natchez. He's on a cotton plantation there now."

"Do say!" exclaimed Martha England. "I don't guess they'll ever get back now."

David spun the glittering coin on the table. "Why did you intimate that they weren't married?"

"No more were they. She said they were married in Philadelphia by a Reverend Cephas Stack and I reckon she thought they were, poor child. But about a year ago a Philadelphia cattle buyer come through here and said there wasn't nothing ministerial about Cephas Stack but his long face."

"But surely she had her marriage lines," interjected David.

The old woman looked craftily from David's face to the gold coin. "She can't read nothing but print, and mighty little of that, unless she's learned more since she left here."

The place seemed haunted by the vision of a pale-haired little girl dressed in filthy homespun and with eyes tragic beyond her years. Wherever David looked in that grimy

taproom those eyes reproached him for his faithlessness. She had loved him, they seemed to say, when even God had abandoned him. David shuddered at the blasphemous thought, then dropped the coin on the table and rose hastily and seized his saddlebags. It would be better to spend the night in the open than in this cursed place.

* * * * *

The zigzag course of the Allegheny Circuit was nearly four hundred miles long and took six weeks to traverse; there were fifty-nine preaching points and fifty-nine sermons to preach, though there were no more than six Methodist societies on the entire circuit. Seventeen times during the course of the circuit David had to close his sermon hastily and ride away in order to be on time for the next appointment a few hours later. Especially during the inclement weather the problem of getting over snow-bound mountains and freezing cold waters was difficult and David found that his strength was being undermined by the toil and exposure and that sometimes on wet days there was a catch below his collarbones, as if his lungs were complaining at the treatment. Once David was thrown into a panic by the thought that Old Tom's consumption was coming over him; he prayed earnestly about the matter and rose from his knees sweetly resigned to whatever fate might await him, but the weather cleared the next day and the symptoms disappeared.

The wasteful scattering of effort weighed on David's mind from the first. It seemed to him that if, instead of having to preach at the homes of isolated Methodists or church friends, he could only spend a week in each of the various central places he could organize a score of additional societies. When he wrote of this to James Ward he was surprised to receive a reply in which the elder expressed

enthusiasm over the plan and urged him to try it the next summer.

The winter passed without adventure save for the perils of the elements. In spite of the hardships of circuit riding David found much time for prayer and thought while he was riding from point to point. These were the times that he liked best, communing with the Presence within as he rode, or kneeling by the wayside with his Bible on a stump before him and reading or praying; there were even days when he was reluctant to reach his preaching point, and more than once he found himself cutting short the social hour with the family that entertained him for the night, in order that he might be up the earlier and on his solitary way.

David spent many bitterly cold nights huddled together with filth and vermin-ridden families in lonely cabins, often with nothing to eat but corn bread and milk. He marvelled that people walked or rode for miles to hear him preach and with his new-found humility he attributed this to the power of God. He never knew that the secret of his success lay in his earnestness and humility and in the simplicity with which he drew back the veil and gave his listeners such a view of another and better life that their hearts ached to enter with him into the delectable country.

Then the rains of March came and the snow melted from the hills and ran in raging torrents through the valleys; sleep in the wayside cabins became a steaming nightmare; the snakes came from their winter dens and slithered among the feet of the people gathered in the cabins to hear the word of God. Food became scarcer than ever and David often tarried in the hills to shoot a deer in order to make his advent to the valley cabins more welcome. The horse that David rode rejoiced at the coming of spring,

and in time its ribs expanded with the fatness gained from the green shoots of the trees and the tender new grass.

One day as David followed the Loyalhanna Creek through the wild defile by which it broke through the Chestnut Ridge he saw a man plowing in a field just off the road and as was his custom he stopped to pass the time of day and invite the family to the preaching. The plowman was Clem Bogardus, one-time hind driver for Buck McCluskey. The man looked at David with an expression that mingled hatred and triumph. He reached up and seized David's sleeve.

"So ye've come ter pay yore reckonin', at last," he said.

David looked down at him steadily though he could have winced with the pain of the grip on his arm.

"Fighting's not in my line," said David quietly. "I'm a preacher now."

"So I heerd," answered Bogardus. "The weepin' prophet, they calls ye. Well, git down off thet harse an' I'll give ye somethin' ter weep erbout."

"Very well," said David, "if you must fight I suppose there's nothing I can do but oblige you, but I do it under protest."

David dismounted slowly and faced his antagonist. Bogardus rushed him but David sidestepped.

"Stand an' fight," snarled the plowman.

He rushed again and David seized one of his outstretched hands, turned, and threw him heavily upon the plowed ground. The next time Clem rushed David staggered him with a blow on the jaw, then the next time threw him again as at first and knelt on the vanquished man's chest with thumbs threateningly close to his eyes.

"Nuf," panted Bogardus. "You win."

"I'll let you up on one condition," said David. "That is that you come to preaching tonight in Haymaker's barn."

"Agreed," answered Bogardus sullenly.

That night David preached with a power that was astounding, to no one more than to himself. Bogardus and four others were down in the straw at the improvised mourners' bench before the sermon had ended and by midnight David had organized a Methodist society and made the former packhorseman the class leader.

* * * * *

Thomasina handed David a letter and waited expectantly for the news. Never had there been such an occasion as this in the memory of any living Braddee; in her experience people wrote letters only when they had good news or powerful bad news to impart. David broke the wax and unfolded the paper. The penmanship was as clear and regular as that of a schoolboy, but the grammar and spelling and mixture of languages were such as only the Pennsylvania-Dutch counties could breed.

Lieber David, we denk it adwisel you to Informe that Mister Thorne hiss Plantashun haf at carts lostet und iss now to us by purrchas. Aber it iss for Miz Starr us consarn who go to lif in a Ark mit the Rifer by she Hoosban beat her. Aush sie haf baby someteim komm in Fruhling she say by yu mit sinful Pride. We denk du best komm, ja?

American Soldaten hier now to die Spanieren from out the coontre to putt zo they nicht Putt yu in Kallabose. Wenn Gott will du Komm we denk by Miz Starr yu doo gut. Capn Thorne is nicht gut und beat her aber er denk the baby by him. Yu all she got komm kwik, ja?

FRITTS MINOR.

David briefly told Thomasina of the news the letter bore, then, with an injunction of secrecy, he related what he had learned in Lancaster. Thomasina humphed vigorously.

"I've knowed all along that man Thorne war a rascal," she said.

David walked alone on the river bank and took counsel of the Presence within him. Since his journey to Lancaster he had known that he had a duty toward Starr and now that she was great with his child he knew that he must go through with that duty. He would marry her, as his heart had always told him he would, even if it meant the end of the ministerial career that he had come to love. It even frightened him a little when he realized that he loved Starr more than the ministry—Daniel Strong would have said more than God—and he dropped on his knees in the lee of a straw stack by the barn and prayed for divine forbearance. Then, like an answer to his prayer, it came to him that he was kneeling on the very spot from which Coffeen's message from Starr had roused him from his drunken stupor. Here had begun the chain of events that had led to his salvation and here, he felt, would begin the chain of events that would demonstrate other of God's mercies toward him.

He counted the months on his fingers. Yes, he could yet be in time if the weather and the perils of the rivers permitted. He rose and went into the lean-to that served as a boat house and selected a strong, ribbed canoe, which he dragged into the open and patched where necessary with oakum and pitch.

When David entered the house he looked in surprise at the table. His war bag lay there ready packed and a bag of food was beside it.

"I've a bite for you to eat, David," said Thomasina. "Ye've no time to lose."

"First, there's something I want you to tell George for me," said David. He took a piece of paper and drew the

plan of the cabin he had dreamed of as a home for Starr and noted carefully the dimensions and certain specifications. Then he counted seventy-five dollars from his money belt.

"Have George build this cabin on my tract—the location is staked out—and put an iron stove and furniture in it. I'll be back by November, the Lord willing, and I want it ready by then."

"It will be," promised Thomasina with a touch of grimness that boded ill for easy-going George.

David then composed a letter to James Ward. The message it bore was vague and told little save that he was bound for the south to clear up a wrong he had done before his conversion, and that he would ask the Pittsburgh brethren to officiate on the circuit in his absence. His letter to John Wrenshall, the Methodist local preacher in Pittsburgh, was to the same effect, but to Daniel Strong he wrote the full story, though he begged that it might remain confidential for the present.

Thomasina and her children helped David carry his plunder and the canoe to the creek, and old Barney trotted possessively beside him. The boat was launched and the gear stowed. David crouched on the bottom of the canoe and Billy stood ready to shove off. Barney whined and leaned his front paws on the gunnel.

"Take him along, Davy," said Thomasina. "He can be useful keepin' watch for you."

David snapped his fingers and the old dog leaped excitedly on board. Billy pushed the boat into the current. As he headed for the channel between the Rocks and McKee's Island David waved a dripping paddle in farewell to the little group that had followed him along the bank. Thomasina furtively wiped her eyes with the corner of

her apron and looked back at him with a fierce beam that was intended to be a smile.

"Don't let nawthin' come between you this time," she exhorted him.

Chapter 64

DAY AFTER DAY BETWEEN THE TOWERING HILLS THAT confined the narrow green flow of the Ohio, David crouched in his canoe and drove it steadily with the current toward his goal eighteen hundred miles away. In the bow sat Barney, silent and watchful as Old Tom had trained him to be, except when a low growl deep in his throat warned of something unusual.

At night, if the moon were not up, David would build a fire on the bank and bake a pone and broil some pork or game. On one of these occasions he clubbed enough passenger pigeons from a tree to last him and Barney for a week. After supper he would push out from the shore again and as soon as he was in the current would give the order "Watch 'em, Barney," then stretch out in the bottom of the canoe. When the moon rose he would sit up and resume his paddling. Barney never failed to be alert when David was asleep and several times his whine woke David in time to steer the canoe from the shore or a floating log.

The mountain ash and the Judas tree bloomed and faded on the greening sides of the hills. Then the tender green of the new leaves burst in delicate sprays among which noisy little parakeets gambolled and scolded. The green deepened into the solemn shadows of the forest and in this covert the wild creatures took parlous refuge from the destroyers that had invaded their immemorial haunts.

For on some of the bottoms that had been virgin forest a year before when the "Well Come" had lumbered by, there now stood hamlets or isolated cabins fresh from the axe

that had levelled the trees into stump fields, or girdled them so that they stood now like gaunt skeletons with grayish streaks showing where the bark had fallen away. Sometimes the settler dropped his axe and sat on a stump in the field to watch the passing aquacade while the children capered on the bank and shouted the inevitable questions.

The river literally swarmed with movers in flatboats, bateaux, and keelboats, or camping out on clumsy rafts of sawlogs. The ancient silence was broken forever as questions, badinage, and billingsgate leaped from craft to craft; flatboats were lashed side by side for company, and at night when the fires of the travelers dotted the banks it seemed that the whole nation must be on the move. It was as if the river was the cord through which coursed the blood that caused new life to quicken in the womb of the continent.

From his stance in the bow Barney watched with a silent aloofness about which there seemed to be a faint air of disapproval. Time after time it seemed to David that the old dog's attitude was a reflection of his master's and that Old Tom must be hovering somewhere near them and watching with melancholy eyes the destruction of the delectable country he had loved. Near the mouth of the Kentucky they overtook a canoe in which sat a hale, buckskinned, elderly man with the stony face and roving eyes of the true forester. They drifted together for a mile and talked while the hunter's dog touched noses with Barney as with an equal, then gave his attention to the bank with professional interest.

Yes, allowed the man, the old days war passin', shore 'nough. The country was gettin' so settled that the riff-raff war comin' in without ary a rifle-gun to kill their meat and the speculators war findin' more and more loopholes in the law to enable them to seize the land from its original

settlers that had fit off the Injuns and clared the forest. Purty soon Kaintucky wouldn't be no better nor the country on tidewater whar people lived by skinnin' one another. Law and physic was two things he couldn't abide—the one made him a pauper and t'other made him sick, and after that life war'n't wuth livin'. He didn't know but what he might light out any day now for the country along the Missouri. They did say the deer and the b'ar war as thick thar as they'd been on the Ohio in the old days and the buffaler war packed so thick in crossin' the river that a man could walk on their backs from shore to shore if it warn't for gittin' throwed off.

He dipped his forefinger in the river and traced a simple map on the blade of a spare paddle. This hyar was Saint Louie and this was the course o' the Missouri, and hyar thar was a country o' forest and savannas—grass and cane for the cattle and meadow land wantin' nawthin' but the plow and seedin' to grow the best carn in the world. A land that must be like Kaintucky was thirty years agone. A far-away look stole into his eyes as if he was seeing the river and the hills as they once had been.

"Truly a delectable country," said David. "A man might live there at peace with himself and the world for a generation yet."

The old man waved a contemptuous hand at a group of immigrants who were dancing to the music of a fiddle on the tops of two lashed flatboats.

"Folks air too shackled now," he said. "They've got to have each other. The sky, and the trees, and the animiles ain't enough."

"But they have souls to save," said David quietly.

The hunter cast a suspicious glance at him. "Ye sound like a Methody preacher," he said.

"I am," answered David. "I, too, know of a delectable

country, a country that lies within us if we will only see it, but more than that, it also lies beyond the skies and after death."

"Wal, more power to ye, parson," said the hunter. "Crit-turs sick as them'll need yore message. I only hopes they kin profit by it." He spat reflectively into the river. "I reckon ye mean heaven by them words," he added. "I got my own idee o' heaven, too, an' hit looks amazin' like to what Kaintucky did when I fust come hyar. Yes, sir, I think heaven must be one Kentuck of a place."

The two canoes drifted apart and David dipped his paddle, then looked over his shoulder as the boat leaped ahead.

"May I ask your name, stranger?" he said.

"Dan'l Boone," answered the hunter with a faint glow of pride. "Belike ye've heard o' me afore."

At Louisville, David loaded his canoe on a wagon and had it carried around the falls rather than risk it in the rushing current. Below the falls the immigrant boats dwindled in number and there were hours at a time when he had the river to himself, and to the memory of Starr. Here was the headland where he had shouted at her for dragging as she labored at the sweep. She had answered him only with a look from those great tragic eyes and striven pathetically to do better. Here they had passed the Indian camp and Starr had gathered the hatchets and laid them one by one beside the men. David's heart seemed to bleed within him at the memory of his cruelty and stubborn indifference. These be things, he cried to the solitude, that God himself could not forgive—only a good woman. Then he passed an hour of remorse for having let such blasphemous words pass his lips.

The hills fell away from their silent vigil over the river and the screams of the eagles and the caws of the crows

echoed over the vast flatness with indescribable loneliness. Deer came down to the river to drink, then stood tamely in the covert while David drifted by with suspended paddle. Several times he saw deer and bear swimming the river in the distance and once a handful of buffalo thundered down a trail, plunged into the water, and headed for the northern shore. That once old Barney forgot his calm and barked as excitedly as a pup while the great shaggy animals milled about the boat in fright and narrowly avoided upsetting it.

The white bluffs below the Wabash loomed on the northern bank. At Big Cave a couple of women spied the lone voyager and ran down to the shore waving their arms and shouting a lewd invitation; one of them lifted the front of her single garment with a gesture that was intended to be provocative. The sight of the cave brought to David the thought of his treatment of Mike and of the strange rescue that Mike and Starr had carried out. There was something as yet unexplained about Thorne's role in that episode. If he hadn't shot the ringleader a body might have thought he'd engineered the whole business.

The mouths of the Cumberland and the Tennessee were passed in the night and during the afternoon of the next day David reached the Mississippi. There, as the dirty green Ohio rushed to meet the yellow-brown Mississippi, a hundred boils broke the surface and tossed the canoe like a chip while Barney crouched in the bow and whined with uneasiness. Once David missed his stroke and struck himself with the haft of his paddle below the collarbone with such force as to make him cry out with the pain. For three or four miles the line between the two currents was plain, then gradually the larger stream conquered and took the clearer Ohio to its muddy bosom.

The setting sun turned the river to fire as David paddled

beneath the reddish heights of the Iron Banks. Suddenly there was a rumble from the shore and David turned in time to see a mass of earth break free and tumble down the steep slope into the river; a column of water rose to meet the cloud of dust left by the avalanche, and the swell rocked the canoe so dangerously that David had to give his attention to its management. When he looked up again a drifting tree and a slowly dissipating cloud that showed golden in the sun were all that remained to mark the latest victory of the river.

And now, as regularly as if set off by clockwork, a thunder storm swooped down on the river each midnight and for half an hour turned the stream into a raging sea that no canoe could survive. Each night, accordingly, David sought the shore and with the canoe turned upside down over Barney and himself slept through the storm. When the water was calm again he would launch the craft and set out.

It was in these voyages between midnight and dawn that he passed the Spanish forts at New Madrid and the fourth Chickasaw Bluff and reached the venerable, bearded woods at Spanish Moss Bend. The days were long and hot and spent in tireless paddling but they were not without their interest. The broad surface of the river or its wooded banks offered endless small dramas. Here a kite swooped silently down toward a dead cypress, then turned suddenly on its side and seized a dozing lizard. An osprey plunged into the river with a splash that could be heard for half a mile, then rose rapidly with a fish in its beak; suddenly an eagle appeared below and forced the osprey higher and higher until finally the captured fish was dropped and neatly retrieved by the eagle as it fell. On a bar littered with excrement and feathers pelicans looked down their bills with a silly pride that should have been an object lesson to men.

Alligators sunned themselves lazily on the bank while above them a hawk fell like a bolt of lightning on a frantic wood duck.

There was the occasional need for game and several times David varied his course to level "Old Katy" at deer or fowl. Grebes, he found, tasted rancid, but wood ducks made delectable morsels. His usual fare, however, was turkey and venison because they were fairly easy to bag and because fewer shots brought more food and did less to disturb the solitude of the wilderness.

Beyond the mouth of the Arkansas, he left the midnight storms behind and entered into a rainless spring. One night there came a peculiar red-gold sunset behind what seemed to be a cloud of smoke, then as night fell he saw that a fire actually raged over the swamp far to the west. The river swung majestically to meet the fire and two hours later David found himself drifting down a reach that was lighted like the mile-wide street of a burning city. The fire swept north and east with a roar that could be heard for miles, enveloping the trees in its path with red and yellow flames; behind it in the heart of the inferno the tall trunks stood like glowing, blood-drenched giants, and farther back they had become lone, blackened towers outlined against shimmering, pulsating walls of gold and white. In the foreground the flames passed through the cane and left it standing, thick and tall and golden, like ripened grain through which the scythe has passed, yet which stands for one proud moment before it bows to the inevitable.

* * * * *

The canoe drifted silently between river and rising mist and David lay in the bottom between sleeping and waking, dreaming of the day when Starr would be his wife. Far

away in the swamp a panther screamed its imitation of a lost child and a screech owl gently mocked it with its liquid ululation. Nearby an alligator less torpid than his fellows greeted the dawn with a drowsy bellow. On the right toward the channel, a sough rose steadily into a roar as a sawyer sprang from the dark depths of the river to a moment of freedom above the surface.

The canoe bumped gently against an obstacle and David sat up. Barney was scrambling over the bags with frightened haste and as he threw himself against David's chest he almost capsized the boat. David brushed the dog aside and saw a moccasin squirming in the bow of the boat with the puffy, cotton-white depths of its mouth exposed to view. It was the work of an instant for David to seize a paddle, give the snake its quietus, and toss its body into the river.

The reluctant Barney was driven back to his place in the bow and David dug his paddle into the water. On both sides of him stretched a field of snags, and wisps of fog twisted and writhed like ghosts rising from mummies standing upright in some half-flooded cavern. Slowly David worked his way toward the channel, and as the snags thinned out he began to breathe more freely.

Ahead of him Barney watched the water wisely, then cocked an anxious ear and looked back at David with a low whine. There was a strange pulsating murmur in the air and the canoe vibrated uneasily. Suddenly there was a sound that was half roar and half twang. The bow of the canoe leaped skyward and as David fell back into the water he saw Barney, "Old Katy," and all his bags and equipment come floating through the air toward him. With a movement that was purely automatic he reached out his right hand and seized the flying strap of his war bag. The next moment he found his left forearm jammed against

a snag and he felt the bones snap within the flesh. The arm went numb, but David seized the snag with his good hand and found a slippery stance for his left foot under water and hooked his right knee over a branch just above the surface. The war bag he hung on a broken limb above his head. Barney had alighted in the water unharmed and now, like the sensible dog he was, rested his front legs over the branch beside his master.

Presently David took his tomahawk and trimmed a branch that thrust out beside him convenient to his left arm and split off a slab which he thrust into his belt. The premonitory vibration of air and water had begun again and before David had finished his task the sawyer sprang roaring into the air and deluged him with spray though he was twenty feet away. Next, he took some buckskin thongs from his war bag and tied running nooses in the ends. He held them between his teeth while he crooked his broken arm over the end of the branch and pulled the bones into place as best he could, gnawing on the buckskin with the pain. He placed the free splint on top of his forearm and with teeth and right hand bound splint and arm to the branch. The sawyer had come to the surface two more times before he had finished his rude operation.

While he was resting David bethought him of his Bible, but when he fished it from the war bag he was relieved to find it little damaged. He wrapped it tightly in his spare shirt and tied the bundle with a thong, then slipped it into his hunting shirt. Next he took his flint and steel and bits of miscellaneous equipment from the bag and disposed them about his person. The fog had lifted by now and he saw that he was a good hundred yards from the eastern shore. With sound limbs it would have been a simple matter to swim from snag to snag, but now it was with

trepidation that David cut loose the branch to which his arm was bound and addressed himself to the task.

Half an hour later he stood on the bank with a prayer of thanksgiving welling in his heart and surveyed the jagged path over which he had come with such toil and pain. He was still a hundred miles from Natchez by the river but the distance might be considerably less by the Spanish road. Moreover he had his knife, tomahawk, and flint and steel; his food he could obtain by setting twitch-ups before he slept. Barring an attack of fever that might be brought on by exposure or inflammation in his badly set arm he should see the Frittses in three or four days.

Chapter 65

DAVID STOOD ON THE POINT OF LAND WITH HIS HORSE'S reins over his arm and looked down at the Orleans boat moored in the mouth of the creek. There was not a sign of life about it, not even a wisp of smoke. Let this boat, he prayed, be the one he sought. He looked eastward down the river toward the high cliffs whose many hued walls and towers glowed in the slanting rays of the sun. Another day was ending, the third day of fruitless search since he had left the Fritts plantation. Starr's time must be near now; certainly a matter of no more than days, perhaps only of hours.

He tethered the horse to a sapling and with his newly splinted arm held protectively close to his side beat his way down through the bushes while Barney trotted alertly ahead of him. The flatboat swung at the end of its taut mooring lines, so ghostly quiet that David forebore to call to its occupants. A plank lay on the bank and this with some difficulty he hitched across to the roof of the boat by standing below the steep bank and moving one end with his good hand. When he had laid the bridge David clambered up the bank and walked across to the boat. It was almost a duplicate of the "Well Come" with a gently pitched deck and a trap door and ladder in the center. The trap door was held shut by a crossbar, but David opened it and peered down. The faint light from cracks and hatchway disclosed nothing but a few boxes and cooking utensils and David would have turned away had not something

stirred in one corner. His heart seemed to leap into his mouth. The form was that of a woman.

He dropped his war bag on the deck and descended hastily. The woman was Starr. Her face was thin and her body wasted, but she recognized him even in the obscurity and struggled to a sitting position.

"David!" she said, and the tears welled in her eyes.

He bent and kissed her lips. "I've come to take you away," he said. "Nothing you can say against it will matter this time."

The look she turned on him was eloquent, but it was like her to waste neither words nor time. "He'll be back any time now," she said. A sudden spasm of pain contorted her face and she fell back on her pallet. "I'm going to have a child," she said between clenched teeth. "Our child."

She grasped his hand fiercely until the spasm had passed.

"I knew," David said. "Fritts Minor wrote me. But what are you doing here? You could have stayed with the Frittses."

"A wife's duty is with her husband," she answered bitterly.

"Starr, he is not your husband. The man who married you to him was not a minister."

"But the lines?"

"They must be forged."

She was silent for an instant, then the full implication of his words burst upon her and her face became radiant as she sat up with a sudden access of energy.

"David!" she cried. "That means—that means—"

"That we can be married," he nodded. "And we will be as soon as we can find a minister. Does Thorne know—your condition?"

"Yes," she answered. "He thinks it's his. I told him he got it while he was drunk. That was easy enough for him

to believe because he was never sober until after he lost the plantation. You know about that?"

"Yes. The Frittses told me. I left them not three days ago."

Her eyes fell upon his bandaged arm. "David! What happened to your arm?"

"Nothing much. I broke it when a sawyer threw me out of my canoe. It'll be all right soon."

Barney's growl sounded on the deck and David lifted his head. Someone was crashing through the brush on the bank of the creek.

"He's coming," cried Starr. Her eyes were dilated with terror.

David patted her hand. "Never you fear," he comforted her. He walked across to the ladder and began to ascend. Thorne's voice shouted an oath and a shot rang out. Barney's growl broke into a howl of pain, then died to a whine. David thrust his head from the hatchway and saw Thorne standing on the shore.

"So! It's Davy again." Thorne was stone sober, and because of that a little more of his old cruel, contemptuous air clung to him. He started to lift his double-barreled fowling piece. "I've another shot here," he said.

David's tomahawk was poised over his head. "Raise that gun," he said, "and this tomahawk will be in your skull before you can pull the trigger."

Thorne stepped aside quickly to the shelter of a tree, but before he could fire David had dropped to the floor of the cabin. Above him Barney's feet scrabbled in a last convulsive movement on the deck, then he was still. Thorne's tomahawk sounded sharply from the bank and the boat swung slowly into the creek.

"It's all right," said David in a low voice. "He's trying to give himself a start on me by cutting the boat loose. If

he knew I had a broken arm and no rifle he wouldn't be letting us off so easily."

"But we can't reach shore. Neither of us can work the boat."

"I can," David assured her. He looked through a crack between the upper boards of the cabin wall. "We're swinging out more rapidly now. As soon as it's dusk I'll steer ashore. I don't think he'll try to follow us. Yes, he's taken my horse and is setting off toward the north."

David clambered on deck. The boat was in the river by now, drifting down on the cliffs with what seemed appalling rapidity. Barney lay dead near the stern of the boat and David dragged him aside and ran the steering sweep between the tholes. Starr's face appeared in the hatchway.

"I think I can help," she said faintly.

David dropped the sweep and sprang to the ladder just in time to seize her hand before she fell. He lowered her gently to the cabin and descended hastily after her.

"Do you want to kill yourself?" he said as he helped her to her pallet. "Now you stay here and I'll be back as soon as I land the boat."

David leaned his chest against the sweep, and though it awoke that mysterious agony under his collarbones, luck was with him; the boat wore around gradually and came to rest under a willow copse on the left shore. The mooring ropes which Thorne had cut were long enough to be tied to the willow trunks. Dusk was on them in earnest and when David went below he could scarcely see Starr lying on her pallet.

"I've got to make a fire," he said. "Are there any candles?"

"No," she answered in a forced voice.

"How are you now?"

"They're coming oftener," she said.

David felt around the hearth and gathered the materials

for a fire. Striking a spark with one hand took some time, but it was easier now than it had been a week before, and within a few minutes he was nursing a tiny flame.

"David," said Starr presently, "did you find Reverend Strong?"

"Yes," answered David, "I overtook him in Tennessee."

"Oh!" The exclamation was eloquent with meaning.

"No," said David quickly, "it was not that. Starr, I hardly know how to make you understand, but before I met him I had a wonderful experience. It seemed to me as though heaven and earth came together and sent a great peace into my heart. I didn't wish to kill Daniel Strong, after that; I only wanted to find him and tell him how much God had made me love him."

"I think I understand," said Starr slowly. "It is the delectable country that you once told me of; some of us find it in the peace that comes with doing our daily work, others seek the company of the great sages, and still others rise above the world and live in the white light of the spirit."

David looked at Starr with a new reverence. "You have known about it all the time," he said.

"Could I have lived without it?" she answered simply.

"Starr," said David hesitantly, "I—have entered the ministry."

"There is nothing more natural," she said.

"You mean—?"

"I mean that you have suffered and found release. What is more natural than that you should wish to tell others of it?"

"Then you are not opposed?"

"Of course not. Only—"

"Go on," said David. "I must hear it."

"Only be sure that you do not seek in that way to escape the responsibilities of life."

David stirred the fire uneasily. Starr groaned as the cramps came back on her and he knelt beside her pallet while she wrung his hand in her pain.

"Is there anything here to eat?" asked David when she had quieted down.

"There's a little cornmeal," she answered.

"I don't believe you've had anything to eat today," he said suddenly.

"I haven't been hungry," she answered.

"Well, you'll need all the strength you can muster."

He boiled a little mush in a kettle and stirred in some loaf sugar and bits of venison from his war bag. After he had fed her he spent the next half hour breaking up any loose wood that he could find about the boat. As the night wore on Starr's cramps became more frequent and finally toward daybreak the baby came. It received its first bath with water from the mush kettle and one of Starr's old cotton dresses provided its swaddling clothes. David held it up in the morning light for Starr to see.

"It's a fine boy," he said. "Look at him screw up his face."

Starr's great eyes were luminous in her pale face and there was a wan smile on her lips.

"Let me hold him, David," she said.

David cradled the infant in the hollow of her arms and she turned her head so that she could look down upon it.

"We'll name it for you," she said. "See—it has hair like yours. Do you know, David, I never doubted but what you would come."

"You should have let me know," he chided her gently.

"I did," she answered slowly. "I held out as long as I could, then I asked Coffeen to have Fritts Minor write to

you. It wasn't so bad until after Gurdon lost the plantation. He couldn't afford whiskey then, and the more sober he was, the meaner he seemed to get. I was afraid that you would never find me after we dropped down river from our first anchorage. I would have tried to get back to the plantation, but he kept me shut up."

David was silent for a moment. "I think," he said finally, "that I made a mistake in leaving you last summer." That, he realized, was a tremendous admission for a Methodist preacher to make. He felt, somehow, that virtue had gone out of him because he had delayed his return until he had known that she was about to bear his child. Well, no matter now. Hereafter he was resolved to cleave to her whatever the Methodist ministry might say. God, he was beginning to agree with Lawyer Brackenridge, did not always speak through the mouths of the ministry.

* * * * *

The days lengthened into weeks. David fed the girl and himself with the product of twitch-up and fishing line. The bones of his arm knitted, a little crookedly it was true, but still soundly enough. Mother and child spent most of the daylight hours on deck, and now that the nightmare of her life with Thorne was over, Starr began to gain weight and some of the tragedy left her eyes and tranquillity took its place. David improved the time by teaching Starr to read and write script and at the same time she undertook to improve her knowledge of print by reading regularly in David's Bible.

Then one morning Mike Fink came up the river astride the steering oar of his keel boat, the "Good Cheer," while James Girty stood in the bow with boathook poised warily against sunken snags. David and Starr left their flatboat with alacrity and two nights later were in Natchez.

Meanwhile, things had been happening in Natchez. The previous February the United States commissioner, Andrew Ellicott, had arrived in the town to co-operate with Governor Gayoso in running the boundary provided for in the Pinckney treaty of 1795 with Spain. Gayoso, however, at the behest of Carondelet, had put off the evacuation of the Natchez country. American troops had come down the river and camped near the town. By June the inhabitants, who were nearly all Americans by birth, had become so impatient at Gayoso's delay that there wanted only a spark to set off an explosion that would drive the weak Spanish garrison from the region.

With American troops dominating the town, David had no fear now of the Spanish law, and as soon as the "Good Cheer" reached the landing, set off in search of a priest with Starr by his side and the child in his arms. Mike and James Girty accompanied them as witnesses. The priest proved to be an Irishman, Father John Denny. David made his mission known.

"You're both Protestants, are you?" asked Father Denny.

"Yes," answered David.

"Then I'll marry you, of course," the priest assented.

"As a matter of fact," said David, "I'm a Methodist minister." He told his story and Starr's frankly. "I explain this to you, Father," he said, "lest someone should recognize my wife as the supposed Mrs. Thorne."

The Irishman studied David with shrewd, kindly eyes. "Your story has the ring of truth," he said. "It is not often that I am able to set two such wrongs as these right by a simple marriage ceremony."

The next day, which was Saturday, June 10, a delegation of citizens waited on David aboard the "Good Cheer," and after stating that they understood that he was a Methodist

minister asked that he preach the following day at the American camp.

"Gentlemen," said David, "do you know who I am? I am David Braddee, the man wanted for the supposed murder of young Patrick Megarrity."

A gray-haired planter named John Harvie stood forth. "Yes, we know that," he answered. "But we have also heard of your ministry in the Louisville jail. If God can save the notorious David Braddee, then there must be something in this salvation the Methodists preach that we ought to know about."

"It is against the Spanish law for a Protestant to hold public services."

"If you preach in the American camp," said the man, "you will be on American soil."

The word that the notorious David Braddee would preach brought hundreds of settlers from the surrounding country. It seemed to David that he had never preached with such passion and tenderness, and he was vaguely disappointed that the audience did not with one accord embrace Methodism. After the service he dined with Lieutenant Pope, the commandant, and Mr. Ellicott, then started for the "Good Cheer." At the top of the bluff a squad of Spanish soldiers met him and quickly escorted him to the dungeon of the fort.

Natchez was stunned that Gayoso, whose power was waning so rapidly, should have the temerity to arrest a man who had so plainly been received into public favor. The light of the next day had scarcely dawned before the people had begun to organize themselves into militia companies. Plans were immediately set on foot to storm the fort and seize the royal galleys on the river, and Gayoso took them so seriously that he and the other Spanish officials fled with their families to the fort.

For two weeks there were busy preparations for war. The guns of the fort were trained on the American camp, and one night when patrols from the two sides met in the town there was an exchange of shots. The settlers met and elected a committee of public safety, which promptly forced Gayoso to compromise. The Spanish civil law was to be effective, but the inhabitants were to be exempted from military duties save in the case of serious riots or Indian invasion; and David Braddee was to be released and guaranteed safe passage up the river. A little less than two weeks after his imprisonment David was released from his dungeon and warned by the governor in person to leave Natchez before nightfall. The crisis thus passed, but it was some months before the dilatory Spanish evacuated the Natchez country and it became indubitably American.

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Yet David, it so happened, was not to leave Natchez behind without one more incident befalling him. Starr had been entertained during David's imprisonment by Mrs. Harvie. Immediately upon his release David paid his respects to Mr. and Mrs. Harvie and with Starr and the baby departed for the "Good Cheer." Starr carried the child and David carried her portmanteau. They walked down the hill immediately behind a laden packhorse train and entered the noisome region under the hill where brothels, saloons, and warehouses jostled one another in slatternly confusion. Suddenly David's eyes fell upon a man lifting a gun against them. It was Gurdon Thorne.

With one tremendous leap David sprang after the hind driver of the packhorse train, snatched the whip from his hand, and sent the twenty-foot lash curling into Thorne's face. With a howl of pain Thorne dropped his fowling

piece and the next moment David was shaking him by the shoulders.

"The marriage lines," he shouted. "Give me Starr's marriage lines."

Thorne's mouth had been so cruelly cut by the stinging lash that he could scarcely speak, but he clawed feebly at his breast and David snatched a leather case from the pocket. With a foot on the fowling piece and one eye on the bleeding Gurdon Thorne, David looked through the scanty contents of the case until he found the paper he wanted, signed by "Reverend" Cephas Stack. He thrust it into his pocket.

"You made a mistake by keeping this paper," he said. "Cephas Stack was no minister and you knew it."

Thorne made an answer, but though the venom was plain the meaning was not save for the one word, "common." David picked up the fowling piece and discharged both barrels into the ground, then took up the portman-teau.

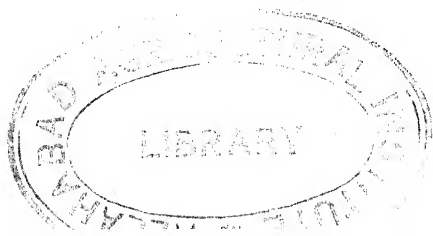
"Come, Starr," he said.

David threw his hunting shirt on the cargo box of the "Good Cheer," slipped a pad over his shoulder, and took up a setting pole.

"Is that arm of yores good enough ter use in settin'?" queried Mike from the steersman's block.

"Sure," answered David confidently. "It's the shoulder that does the real work anyhow."

He joined the line of polemen at the bow, set the stout ash pole in the mud of the river bottom, and firmly braced the button against his shoulder pad. The pain in his lungs was almost unbearable, but he walked steadily to the stern, then lifted the pole and returned to the bow. The pain mounted into agony and the sweat stood out in great drops



on his forehead. Suddenly his head began to whirl and he staggered against the cargo box.

"Grab him there, you galoots," shouted Mike. "Hist him up on the box."

David knelt on the deck with his forehead in Starr's hand and coughed as if his lungs would come out, while the bloody froth covered his mouth and flecked the planks under his face. Mike called another man to the steering oar and stood over David anxiously; Starr's face lifted and Mike saw that the old tragedy he knew so well had returned to her eyes.

"I guess there's no more settin' fer you, Dave," he said. "From now on yo're a passenger."

Chapter 66

IT WAS A CRISP DAY IN LATE OCTOBER WHEN THEY ARRIVED at the new cabin above Chartiers Creek. George had not only built house and furniture, but he had put up a little log barn and filled the loft with hay and fodder, and Thomasina and Dick Braddee and the McKaigs had furnished the new household with copper and iron ware, dishes, and farming tools. Then, on the evening of David's return, came the people from all about the Rocks with simple gifts of linen, bacon, flour, and maple sugar; for David was one of them and though they comprehended little about the delectable country of which he talked, yet they loved him for the comfort he brought them and for the hope of a better life after death.

The next day David went into Pittsburgh alone and saw Mr. Brackenridge. The lawyer examined the marriage lines David had taken from Thorne and listened with interest to David's story. Once he seemed on the point of interrupting but evidently changed his mind.

"What do you intend to do now?" said Brackenridge when David had finished.

"Why, go on preaching."

"Can you support a family on sixty-four dollars a year?"

"No, but I have my little farm that I can cultivate between times."

"What makes you think that the Methodists will let you go on preaching? To speak plainly, David, will they not consider that you have been married by a popish priest to a woman who has been living in sin?"

"But she was not responsible for that."

"My experience with churchmen," answered Brackenridge bitterly, "is that they care nothing for good intentions; it is their governing rules that they care for."

"You still have hopes that I will study law," said David soberly.

"There is so much to be done for men's bodies and minds," returned the lawyer. "Let those who are fitted for nothing else pray for their souls."

David stood up. "I have chosen my course, Mr. Brackenridge," he said quietly. "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel."

"Then nothing will move you?"

"Nothing," replied David.

"We shall see," said the lawyer, and David thought that there was a quizzical light in his eyes as if he knew more than he was ready to say.

Half an hour later Dr. Richards put on his coat and adjusted his neckcloth with a somber air.

"Well, doctor?" said David.

The medico strode the length of his office, then turned to face David. "It's phthisis, all right," he said. "You must have caught it from your grandfather in prison."

"But the illness I suffered after my release passed quickly," objected David.

"It usually does," replied Richards, "but the disease is only laying low. Riding the circuit last winter in all kinds of weather gave it the chance it needed, and your exertion at the pole must have ruptured the lung tissue. You say that you have not spit blood since that occasion?"

"No."

"The disease, perhaps, has not yet reached the stage when bloody expectoration should be evident."

"Will it prove fatal?"

"Only the God you serve knows that. Candor compels me to tell you it usually is."

"How long should I have?"

"That I cannot say, either. It may be a year, it may be ten years. This I can tell you—repeat the exposure of last winter and it will not be long. If you wish to live, you will avoid all exertion, excitement, and worry, remain indoors during inclement weather and eat plenty of wholesome food. That is all that I or anyone else can do for you. Medical science knows no cure for the disease."

David walked home slowly, his chin upon his breast. Dr. Richards had offered him one hope of life and it seemed to fall in with Lawyer Brackenridge's desire. Perhaps if he studied law he might yet have a long life and a useful one. And it was a tempting prospect, not only because life was sweet but because he now had Starr by his side. Then he thought of Brackenridge, who in the parlance of the Presbyterian elders had given up his license to preach and learned to swear. David had learned long ago that the lawyer was not a happy man save when late at night he could lock himself in with his Horace or when with jovial cup in hand he could give himself to composing rhymes or drumming up a Teague O'Regan adventure for a new volume of *Modern Chivalry*. Were not Brackenridge's struggle for literary fame and his dream of a literate democracy the outcomes of his failure to be accepted into their ranks by the gentlemen of Pittsburgh? Did anyone strive for human advancement, either for the preservation of worldly or spiritual values, unless he felt his own security threatened in some way?

David stopped and looked out across the Ohio to the distant heights on which a few splashes of color lingered. Without the death of the leaves there would have been no autumn glory, no warm winter blanket for the slum-

bering grass and flowers and roots. Perhaps it was in the divine plan that men should suffer, in order that by their suffering they might lift their fellows to a higher plane. Lawyer Brackenridge, because of the cloud of ostracism under which he lived, was becoming a power for the preservation and advancement of human liberty; David Braddee might yet, in the few years that remained to him, become a humble sign post to point men to the delectable country of the soul.

David and Starr sat hand in hand looking into the fireplace. Beside them little David slept peacefully in the half keg that was his crib.

"I have wondered times without number," said David, "what cradle held me as a child and what sort of mother it was that laid me there."

"Don't you remember anything of her?" said Starr.

"I don't know," replied David. "There is a vague memory of standing in a pannier and looking across the horse's back to the black poll of another lad and then back to a dark-haired young woman on another horse. An Indian with an eagle feather held the bridle of the horse on which the other boy and I rode and all of us were listening to the thrum of the Indian drums. Beyond that my memories are of living in a mountain cabin with a family of which that young woman was definitely not a member. Then one night the Indians swooped down on the cabin and massacred the family. I escaped in the darkness and hid in a hazel copse. The next morning the Braddees, who were passing with a packhorse train, heard me sobbing with fear and lonesomeness and took me home with them. Theirs has been the only home I remember well."

"Was David your real name?"

"I think so. At least it was what I called myself when they found me. The Braddees always treated me as one

of their own. Their affection and their family habits and traditions wrapt me around as completely as if I had been born there, and it was only rarely that I thought of myself as an orphan. Theirs was a tolerant, undisciplined family, save for the lash of Aunt Seena's tongue, and I grew up much like them."

"Perhaps," observed Starr, "that is why I can scarcely picture you in the rigid breastplate of a Methody preacher."

"And yet I feel that I must be up and doing," said David. "It may be that I have something of Old Tom in me. In his last days he preached the glory of the world that he once knew, of the divine intention that every man should stand on his own legs and live close to the fields and the forest that nourished him. I preach the glories of a delectable country where we can live now and hereafter, whatever our lot on earth may be."

"Do you preach the delectable country," asked Starr quietly, "because you cannot have the world that your grandfather had?"

David digested her words for a moment. There might be truth in them, he admitted, yet was that not all the more reason why he should go on?

"My dear," he said, "there is something that I cannot withhold from you. Today in Pittsburgh I went to see Dr. Richards."

He went on, telling of the alternative the doctor had offered him, while Starr listened with the numbness of premonitions now fulfilled. Months ago, while she stood holding David's head as he spat blood on the deck of the "Good Cheer," she had known that their happiness would be short-lived, and she had schooled herself to resignation. This would be the final test of her love—her willingness to give him to the cause he served.

"I have a message to carry to the world in which I once

lived in sin," concluded David. "God has committed unto me the word of reconciliation, and I must preach it though it means my death."

David felt the convulsive movement of her hand in his, but her face in the firelight bore only a calm, sure love.

"The few years that we will have together," she answered, "will be more than I ever expected at the hand of God. Do you think for a moment that I would stand in the way of your doing whatever you think is right?"

"No," said David. "I think you knew long before I did the gospel of reconciliation with the Will that guides the universe; only perhaps it has not been personified with you as it has with me. God speaks to each of us with a different voice: must the great Jehovah who has shown such infinite variety in creating the world around us confine himself to one pattern in molding the human clay?"

Starr smiled sadly. "Methinks, David," she said, "that you will either break the Methodist mold or be broken by it."

* * * * *

The ideal of the Methodist circuit rider was that neither ice nor snow, nor flood nor fire should hinder him in his appointed task. The proverbial saying on inclement days was that nothing was out but crows and Methodist preachers. And David lived up to the ideal, though he could trace month by month the advancing stages of his disease in the growing oppression in his chest, the variation in his pulse, and the coming on of a hacking cough.

At first he had gone forth with no greatcoat. A few years before he would have missed it little, but now the rain and the wind chilled him so that he cut a hole in the middle of his gray blanket and wore it as a poncho while he rode and even a few times when he was forced to preach outdoors. At such times he was reminded of Old Tom's

mantle and it seemed to him that the old man's burning desire to find a solution for the longings of the human heart had in a peculiar measure descended upon him.

The people among whom he labored were abjectly poor, but though they had little money to give toward his support, they were generous with food and plain clothing. So it was that David's worn-out French suit was replaced with a suit of biliously brilliant copperas cloth and his shoes with farm-made products. It was after these gifts that David found in his Bible a passage that comforted him greatly. "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass," it read, "and as thy days, so shall thy strength be." After that, with the optimism of the tuberculous, David was assured in his own mind that if God saw fit to take him it would not be with consumption.

There was little that David could put in the diary he kept, save for his preaching appointments and texts, the thoughts that came to him as he rode, and now and then a mild adventure as he broke through the ice while crossing a frozen stream or met a hardened sinner bent on personal violence. Once a man who resented the conversion of his wife molded a silver bullet and waited for David on the trail. The weeping prophet, he vowed, would neither weep nor prophesy again. But as he lay in ambush it seemed to him that a powerful hand seized him and shook him over hell until, as he later expressed it, his bones turned to water and his heart to lead. He was in this state when David passed by and heard him groaning and praying in the bushes and dismounted and helped him find the peace he sought.

It was during a question period after the sermon that an unbeliever undertook to convince the young preacher of the error of his ways.

"How do you know you have a soul," he inquired with specious innocence.

"Because I feel it," said David.

"Do you smell, taste, hear, or see your soul?"

"No."

"Then you have four senses against you."

"Suppose you are suffering from a toothache," answered David. "Do you smell, taste, hear, or see it?"

"No."

"Then, my friend, you have four senses against you."

When on the quarterly meeting occasions the "hell robbers" of Methodism came together, David found himself impressed by the tremendous earnestness of the ministry, a humorless earnestness that bordered on fanaticism, and that slaughtered mercilessly every interpretation that deviated from the rules set by the founder, John Wesley, and especially from those of his disciple, Francis Asbury. From the first David found himself vaguely uneasy at this intolerance of things that struck him as nonessentials, but only once did he open his mouth. It was on a Sunday when Bishop Asbury read John Wesley's sermon on dress to a group of assembled ministers and exhorted them to impress upon their congregations its injunction to cultivate plainness of attire.

"Is it not inconsistent," queried David, "in a world where each man stands equal before God, for Mr. Wesley to excuse royalty in the wearing of gorgeous apparel but to insist that we must adopt plainness as our standard?"

David could feel the appalled silence that descended upon the listeners; the heavy features of Francis Asbury bore the surprise of a full-grown man who has been struck by a child.

"It is not for us," he said finally, "to question the word

of the founder until we can approach to the holiness which in him was evidenced both by his life and his fruits."

David subsided, but from that day he knew that ecclesiasticism had Methodism by the throat even as it had Presbyterianism. Was there no way, he asked himself sadly, in which a man could be free, even in the spiritual realm?

It was not long before David discovered that the ministers did not trust him, and when he learned the reason he could have laughed had it not been for the sorrow in his heart. It was not because he lacked ardor nor because he failed of success—he surpassed the brethren in both—but because his eyes did not strike fire, because he led men gently to Christ rather than driving them by the fear of hell. He failed to groan in spirit as a good Methodist should, so how could his ministry be sound and permanent in its results?

With a sincerity that was pathetic to Starr, the one person who shared his heart, he applied himself to meeting the standard. The yellowed pages of his journal are full of "Groanings that cannot be uttered."

"God has seen fit to lead me in a parlous way," he wrote, "for daily I am buffeted by the Devil. I do not regret my lack of Creature comforts, nor even the absence from my beloved wife and precious infant, though these in themselves are hard enough. It is that I take little pleasure in my sermons, seldom preaching with the freedom I once enjoyed with God's help, and rarely becoming a consolation to those who seek me out.

"And yet it seems that the sweet counsel of the holy Presence within has never been more real. Daily I renew my covenant with God and revel in a love feast with Him. Can it be that I look too much for the approbation of my brethren and that looking to them rather than to Christ hampers the freedom of the message I bear? Lord, be my

help! "When shall this war of passion cease and my free soul enjoy thy peace?"

The diary was on the whole a sad record of travail of spirit and fading bodily strength, yet there were spontaneous bursts of poetic sentiment as pagan as the springtime and in strange contrast to the context.

"This day," he wrote at the borderline between April and May, 1798, "this day bloomed the Judas tree for the first time this spring and my heart was warmly comforted by this reminder of our Lord's death for me. Methinks a world that breeds such ecstasy is not the lost estate divines contend."

Usually, when the weather suited, he held a book before him as he rode, but his eyes were lifted often to the green of the trees and the blue of the skies and his ears were attuned to the songs of the birds; or he would half-consciously begin composing a couplet and polishing it lovingly as a wife turns a wedding ring on her finger. One evening, after his mind had harked back while riding to his days on the river, he confided to his diary a little poem that seemed to express the change in his life.

I rub my shoulders on the stars,
But only as I merge in Thee,
Blest Power that raises mortal bars
And to a cipher gives infinity.

Through all of this David's natural sensibleness was turning him gradually toward an easier way of life. Not that he yielded his belief in his mission; he merely became conscious that he was too tolerant to be a Methodist minister. The world was a complicated place, he reflected, and each of us is the product of the environment in which we live. The lies of abused children and the thievery of starving

immigrants awoke his sympathy rather than his censure. Almost before he knew it he had come to doubt man's freedom to choose between salvation or damnation, and the reading of Winchester's *Dialogues*, that taught a universal redemption from hell, increased his perplexity. Was it even possible, he began to ask himself, that there was no hell? He turned from the thought in terror; if there was no hell there might be no heaven—what then was to become of the delectable country which he so earnestly sought for himself and others?

Chapter 67

THEN IN 1799 THERE SWEEPED OUT OF THE SOUTHWEST A new institution, the camp meeting, and with it a strange kind of madness that shook the Monongahela country from its Calvinist repose like the trumpet of the judgment day. Men stood in the markets and before the courthouses crying, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found," and hundreds of sin-conscious fell in their tracks as if cut down by the scythe of the Lord.

Riding in the van of this tumult was the figure of James Ward, his reverend locks streaming like banners in the wind, and his bull voice shouting the watchword of the revival: "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision; he shall speak unto them in his wrath and vex them in his sore displeasure." The harvest of the Lord was at hand, he announced, the harvest of his mercy and of his vengeance. "For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; the daughter of Babylon is like a threshing floor, it is time to thresh her; yet a little while, and the time of her harvest shall come."

In the shadow of Chestnut Ridge they gathered from all the Monongahela country, the pious and the curious, come by hundreds and thousands to weep and pray and stare. In the forest there was a bivouac of tents and covered wagons a hundred strong; hard by was the meeting place, a log platform for the preachers and fronting it rows of logs marshalled for the convenience of the congregation.

To David there was something unholy and terrifying about that camp week. Delayed in the north by the neces-

sity of waiting to close the eyes of a dying friend, he was several days late in arriving. Already the heaven had begun to work. The people he passed on the road seemed to move in a strange dream; some of them walked sedately with unseeing eyes lifted to heaven; others shouted and laughed as if beside themselves; and here and there a child or an adult roved aimlessly about, a glassy stare upon his eyes, emitting short staccato barks.

Darkness fell over the camp and flaming torches cast a weird glare over the sacred clearing and the forms of the Methodists seated upon the logs; outside the circle the greater part of the audience shifted uneasily, ready to scoff, yet vaguely disturbed lest they become drawn into the strange rites. James Ward rose to preach—it was the third sermon that day—and announced as his text the words “Flee from the wrath to come.” Like the summer wind sighing through the oaks and beeches a subtle magnetism stole across the grove; they were no longer rational beings there; they had become united in one primitive, unthinking, frenetic personality which James Ward swayed as a capricious wind bends the grass.

As if motivated by a signal a dozen men, women, and children rose, and growling, barking, and snapping their teeth, rushed aimlessly into the woods while the watching crowd gave way fearfully; a moment later they converged again on the clearing and sought their seats, careless of the foam that bubbled from their lips and fell upon their clothes. James Ward preached on, painting the horrors of hell with diabolical familiarity. A child on the outskirts of the clearing shuddered, then its body was contorted by jerks that set it to screaming with a peculiarly horrible ululation. A woman across the clearing answered the scream and fell to the ground contorted by orgiastic jerks. James Ward pounded his Bible and shouted, “God send down

the power." A score of voices echoed him and a man began running up and down one side of the clearing and a woman on the other. The jerks spread, one, two, and three joining in at a time until all over the clearing there were contorting figures, while the air rang with their spasmodic screams. A young minister fell off the pulpit in a cataleptic trance and lay with features calm and eyelids barely parted; a middle-aged woman took his head in her lap and crouched weeping, screaming over and over, "I see hell! I see hell!"

A comely girl in the back of the clearing began to jerk. Her bonnet and combs flew away; her long black hair fell down, then as the violence of her movements increased, it began audibly to snap. Once a man stood up with his head moving in a circle; suddenly he spun about several times and toppled over. By now the influence had reached the crowd on the outskirts and scores of them fell to jerking; some of them seized hold of saplings to aid in controlling themselves and soon all over the grove the green tops of the saplings were swaying to and fro with the rhythm of the jerkers. Even of those who fled, many were seized as they ran and halted, jerking and screaming for mercy.

Even the bull voice of James Ward was too weak to cope with the tremendous volume of sound and he stood with one elbow on the pulpit watching the scene with a strange satisfaction. Those who had not been seized by the jerks or struck down in trances had left their seats long ago and roved about praying with the sin-conscious and shouting inarticulate phrases. Out in the grove two or three ministers or local preachers were mounted upon stumps, laying about them with alternate words of wrath and comfort. A six-year-old lad sat on his father's shoulder and with streaming eyes shouted, "Turn, sinner; turn, before it is eternally too late."

Gradually the jerks began to die away. Some sat down quietly and some fell into convulsions and wallowed on the ground for as much as five or ten minutes; others fell prostrate in cataleptic trances. It was remarkable the number of times a man would fall across a young woman's body or a woman would swoon against the breast of a man with whom she was praying. Moving here and there through the trees a score of men busied themselves in gathering up the stricken and laying them in rows on each side of the clearing.

Beyond the clearing scores of reeling figures, chiefly young women, wandered through the woods; sometimes they staggered into trees, then veered and went on, so transported by the frenzy of the hour that they were oblivious to their bruised and bloody faces. Here and there, deep in the woods, the wanderers sometimes came together in their erotic excitement, or perhaps fell victims to the men who hung like vultures on the edge of the camp meeting waiting for this propitious moment.

David watched the lurid scene in the clearing with the same horrified fascination that he might have given to a Bacchanalian revel in an ancient Syrian grove. He had never seen anything like it, even in his itinerant days with Daniel Strong. The people were as drunk with the spirit as other men became with whiskey; with him the spirit of God was manifested by the abiding peace of the Presence within, and not since the day of his conversion had he lifted his voice far above the common level. Too many of the ministers, he felt, and most of all, James Ward, were spiritual exhibitionists who saw in the intensity of these demonstrations the hallmark of their success.

And yet—

The next evening as David stood on the platform, Bible in hand, speaking to the people, he saw, in the flickering

light of the pine torches, a huge man come riding between the rows of logs toward him, cursing as he came, and swinging a heavy whip in his hand. Even in the uncertain light the horrible crisscross scars on the man's face identified him. It was Buck McCluskey.

A gasp of horror ran through the congregation; a number rose from the logs and one or two men tried to seize the horse's reins, but had their heads cruelly rapped by the butt of McCluskey's whip. David's words ran on as smoothly as the waters of a deep stream. The rider reached the platform and raised his arm to strike, then slowly, with his eyes fixed on David with a glassy stare and with his whip hand still raised, he slid from his horse and fell prone in the straw.

He laid there all night with slackened pulse and face waxen save for the red cross of his scars. In the morning when he awoke he was a changed man. Buck McCluskey was destined to become one of the first men to carry the banner of Methodism beyond the Mississippi River.

* * * * *

David lifted his eyes from his book to find Daniel Strong on his big gray horse before him on the trail. Like father and son they fell into each other's arms and wept.

"I have been looking for you, my son," said Daniel Strong presently. "I weep both for joy and for sorrow at seeing you."

"For sorrow?" echoed David, though in his heart he knew what his friend meant.

"Yea, for sorrow," said the older man. "What is this I hear that you have done? You have been married to an unawakened woman, the wife of another man, and that by a Romish priest."

"I wrote you before I went down river," replied David. "You needed no tale bearers to know."

The minister shook his head. "I never received the letter," he said. "It is little wonder; I move about so much. I have been in New England and the British provinces for two years. Sometimes I feel conscience-stricken lest my much traveling is not so much to serve the Lord as to gratify a natural wanderlust."

They sat on a grassy bank while David told the story of what he had learned in Lancaster and of his journey down the rivers.

"She is my wife," he concluded, "the woman I love above everything in the world, and I owe to her my first duty. Nothing now can change that."

"What you have done is only human," said Daniel Strong, "and I doubt not arose from a sincere desire to right the wrongs of the past as well as to take unto your bosom the woman you love. Yet, you have broken the laws, both of God and man."

"How is that? God is my witness that I had no such intention."

"When I heard the tales that were being told of your marriage I took counsel with Friend William Rogers, a lawyer of Reading. He assures me that the marriage between Captain Thorne and Starr was entirely legal and binding, no matter who performed it. The common law of Pennsylvania legalizes almost any form of marriage, however loose it be."

Daniel Strong's words smote David with overwhelming force. This was probably what Thorne had tried to say after David's whip had lacerated his mouth; it explained also Lawyer Brackenridge's enigmatic parting words that day in October nearly two years back. The lawyer, ap-

parently, was ready to go to any length to disgust his young friend with the Methodist ministry.

"There is only one thing for you to do," said Daniel Strong. "You must put her away and apply anew for admission to the ministry. The conference may be willing to consider the circumstances and accept you."

"I cannot give up Starr," replied David slowly. "In the sight of God we are as truly married as ever man and woman were."

"Then you must resign from the ministry and the church," said Daniel Strong. "And may God have mercy on your soul."

David's eyes had never been clearer nor more candid as he faced his friend.

"I have had a call to preach the gospel," he said, "and preach it I will in spite of hell or the church. If the church will not have me, let it bring me to trial and cast me out. Until then I shall go on as I have before, loving both it and my wife, and preaching God's reconciliation to man."

Chapter 68

AND SO DAVID CAME AGAIN TO THE CITY OF BROTHERLY LOVE, riding alone, for nowhere was there one of the itinerants who would dare ecclesiastical wrath to bear him company. Philadelphia, he meditated, was always the same: a city of silks and carriages, of smug grays and polished silver buckles, rich, conservative, battenning on the blood of the interior it despised; ready to do lip service to Whig or Tory—whichever star was brightest—and keeping a weather eye open for the main chance.

In St. George's Chapel David answered to his name at the roll call of the first session, but thereafter he took no part in the business either by speaking or voting. When, at the close of the day no one offered him the hospitality of a home, he departed for a tavern, and seated in a booth ordered a supper of bacon and greens.

John Penburne stood by David's table. He was a little portlier now than he had been on that day five years before, when he had marked down David's name for imprisonment, and the lines of worry on his forehead were deeper; otherwise he was the same hesitant, self-effacing man, no more distinctive than his sandy hair.

"Mr. Braddee," said John Penburne, "it is the wish of my wife and myself that you make your home with us as long as you are in Philadelphia."

"You understand my situation, Mr. Penburne?" asked David.

"Fully, sir."

"Then I accept with pleasure," returned David as he picked up his saddlebags. "I am ready, sir."

With his horse's reins over his arm David followed John Penburne to the same pillared house on whose portico he had seen the Penburne family on the day of the entry of the whiskey rebels into the city. A servant took the horse and David followed his host into the house and to the drawing room. At their entry two women rose; one of them was a black-haired, strikingly handsome, yet sweet-faced woman who looked as if she might not have passed thirty but whom John Penburne introduced as his wife; the other was a daughter, Margot Parkes. The bold, willful slant of her features and the hardness of her eyes put David strangely in mind of someone else. Suddenly he remembered that it was Dick Penburne, the Creek Indian trader, and that the man was her grandfather. But Mrs. Penburne was holding out her hand to David.

"I hope I am not inconveniencing you," he said as he took the hand.

"Not in the least, Brother Braddee," she answered.

David noted the form of address. "Are you a Methodist, ma'm?" he asked.

"I am," she replied. "I was converted in England under John Wesley."

"You understand the peculiarity of my situation?"

"We understand perfectly. That makes no difference. We once counted it a privilege to number your family among our friends, David. May we call you David?"

"I should be honored, ma'm," answered David. "It would give me a touch of home that I sadly miss here."

Elizabeth Penburne's motherly soul went out to the sad-eyed young man. Her mind turned back to the days of her youth when two people who had been very dear to

her had been caught in much the same dilemma as David and his Starr.

An hour later, when David came down stairs on his way to the evening meeting of the conference, he heard voices in the front entry.

"It will take every sixpence the old man has," a masculine voice was saying. "He'll be begging in the streets."

There was the sound of a woman's short, mirthless laugh. "Who cares!" she said.

David bowed slightly to Margot Parkes. Her companion was a lean, hawk-nosed man in the middle thirties who looked at David with a startled air and laughed nervously.

"Mrs. Parkes," said David, "I met your grandfather a matter of three years ago on the Tombigbee. You remind me greatly of him. He saved my life."

The girl flushed and showed her even teeth unpleasantly. David had the distinct impression that she would as lief her grandfather had not gone to the trouble. "He's an Indian trader of some kind, I believe," she said negligently.

"An Indian trader, yes," answered David, "but the greatest one in the Creek nation. They call him the King Pin."

"The King Pin!" said the man with sudden interest. "Why, I've heard of him for years. Is he your grandfather?"

"I suppose so," said Margot, and turned her back on the copperas clothed backwoods preacher. David took his cue and departed. He did not learn until the next day that the man was Margot's husband, Senator Parkes of South Carolina.

The conference dragged on through the longest week David had ever passed, longer even, it seemed, than any similar period that he had spent in prison. Then he and Daniel Strong were sitting together at an oak table in St. George's

Chapel listening to the reading of the charges. A written copy had, of course, been in David's hands for some time, but he had never been able to convince himself that they would actually be used; even now it all seemed to be a bad dream as the words dropped with unction from the mouth of the fat clerk. They were all there: marrying a woman who by the common law was already married to another man, moreover an unawakened woman, and that by a priest; his failure to stress the necessity of a second work of grace was there, and even his failure to preach plainness of attire.

"I can do little for you," said Daniel Strong, who had agreed to conduct his defense. "The facts are against you. For the last time, will you admit your error and throw yourself on the mercy of the brethren?"

David shook his head numbly and listened to James Ward's impassioned tirade against him. The trial was soon over. The bishop cleared his throat and his heavy, fanatical features had never been so severe as he looked down at the culprit. David wondered if he was recalling the time when the wisdom of John Wesley concerning plainness of dress had been questioned.

"Do you have anything to say, Brother Braddee, before we end the proceedings?"

David rose slowly and looked about the room. It might have been a jury of wolves sitting upon the fate of a lamb for all the sympathy that appeared there—save for that on the rugged face of Daniel Strong.

"I have no reply to make," said David, "to any of the charges save the first and second. I reiterate, and shall do so to the day of my death, that in the sight of God my wife and I are as truly married as though her first husband were dead. Did not Christ himself allow the putting away of a spouse for adultery?"

"As for the accusation that I have married an unawakened woman, I perceive that Elihu the son of Barachel said truly that great men are not always wise, neither do the aged understand judgment. Brethren, my wife has taught me one thing that Arminian theology overlooks; I mean that watching her I have come to doubt the necessity of awakening in all cases."

There was a shocked silence as David sat down. The bishop wore an expression that might have been interpreted as pained triumph.

"Brother Braddee," he said. "To take your replies in order, I will say to the first that the fact remains that there was no civil divorce; if there had been it would still have been the privilege of the church, not of you, to judge of the permissibility of your marriage. To the second I can only answer that your voluntarily disclosed heresy makes it more than ever our painful duty to cut you off from the body of Christ."

David was on his feet again. If ever in all his life his face had borne the flaming banner of wrath it was now.

"*You* cut me off from the body of Christ!" he said, and his voice though not raised above speaking tones carried distinctly to every corner of the room. "What you do is cut me off from a body of death. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith. Ye blind guides which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. You withdraw within the four opaque walls of your theology; you think your floor is iron against the machinations of the devil, but your ceiling is brass against the rain of God's mercy. You whip up the wails of poor deluded souls because they soothe your world-wounded egos and because you are too nerve-shattered to seek the quiet, abiding presence of the spirit of

God. The divine afflatus has become a cant phrase, a stinking belly wind that shrivels the souls of those you breathe upon. Away with you! Ye poison the very ground in the garden of the Lord and your fruit is fit only to feed the swine. I want to think of God's minister as a tree planted by the river of eternal water, whose leaf shall not wither and that bringeth forth fruit in all seasons."

The bishop's face was contorted by anger. "By what authority do you thus insult the Lord's anointed?" he shouted. "What gifts have you that set you on high to lecture us? What learning of the schools or seminaries?"

"I need none," answered David calmly. "I am God taught."

"Theodidact!" said someone in a horrified whisper.

The bishop controlled himself by a visible effort and settled his face into its habitual heavy mask. For a minute David was bowed with chest close to his knees, racked by a terrible coughing fit. When he had recovered and had once more lifted his face the bishop rose with a paper in his hand.

"I shall read the decision," he said coldly. "The accused is guilty on all counts, as charged." He took an open Bible from his desk and read slowly and in funereal tones: "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."

David held out his hand to Daniel Strong but the big man's hand hung at his side.

"The church has spoken," he said with a stony face. "From now on you go it alone."

The preachers parted before David and he walked between them to the door. On the steps he stopped and looked at the houses and teeming life of the city. He had always known, he told himself, that Philadelphia would be the death of him.

* * * * *

Brackenridge reined in his horse beside David. "I have ridden hard to overtake you," he said. "I would like your company on the long journey to Pittsburgh."

"I am honored, sir," replied David. "We have seen little of each other in the past two years."

"True enough," answered Brackenridge. "You have been busy about other matters; but now that God has cast you off in the person of his church I make bold to present myself again."

"You know then?"

"Who doesn't!" said the lawyer, with the brilliant sardonic smile that David remembered so well. "The city is ringing with the invective which you threw out like hot shot from a defeated man-o'-war. For the first time since the old days I was proud of you. The experience was severely gained, David, but it will be worth while. The church is only a whited sepulchre with little in it save scattered bones and decaying flesh."

"I fear you speak the truth of too many of its servants, Mr. Brackenridge," said David, "but I thank God, not of all of them; many of them are devoted men giving their lives for what they believe to be right. I would even make excuses for the others. They are wounded souls who seek to heal themselves by withdrawing from the world save as they court its contempt. Perhaps they are too blind to

know that the salve of that contempt only suppurates their wounds the more until they burden the air with the stench."

"A true sentiment aptly spoken," said the lawyer. "I only wish you could have been spared the pain."

The young man's smile bore a touch of sadness that tugged at the rugged Brackenridge's heart. "I was wrong in staying in the church," said David. "The circumstances could scarcely have helped but bring reproach on the work of God in the eyes of unbelievers. I think you knew this would come, Mr. Brackenridge. You must have hoped for it, else you would have told me that Starr's marriage to Thorne was legal."

"Yes, I knew it," answered the lawyer. "I saw that you shared the usual misapprehension that a marriage, to be legal, had to be performed by a justice or a clergyman. I was afraid that if you had to choose between Starr and the church you would have chosen the church. I wanted Starr to have her chance. There is nothing on earth to be compared to a good wife, David."

"I know it now," answered David, then added as if to himself, "Nor perhaps in heaven, either."

"It *is* heaven," said the lawyer. His dark eyes searched David's face as if seeking a ray of hope. "What now?" he asked. Then he went on as if fearful of the answer. "You are young yet, David, and these disappointments will pass, leaving nothing but good. There is a place in my office whenever you are ready to take it. I need you, David, you don't know how much. I still dream of a literate democracy, but it is an uphill fight. Won't you come over and help me?"

"I think you are doing very well, Mr. Brackenridge," said David. "You have elected Mr. Gallatin to Congress for the third time."

Brackenridge flashed his sardonic smile again. "It was a

nip and tuck victory," he said. "You will never know with what art I laid siege to Presley Neville, puffing his self-esteem with the wind of flattery until he was ready to take the field against John Woods and thus divide the Federalist forces that Albert Gallatin might win."

David smiled at the memory of that stratagem which had set the whole Monongahela country to laughing or cursing, dependent upon the political point of view, and had made Brackenridge a power in the Democratic-Republican councils.

"We have prevailed upon Chief Justice McKean," continued Brackenridge, "to run for governor on the people's ticket."

"I thought he was a Federalist," said David.

"He was, though not without liberal leanings," answered Brackenridge. "Now, like Saul on the road to Damascus, he has seen a great light. We shall win, be assured of that. The tide is setting in our favor. And the people will know how to reward those who have borne the burden and heat of the day for them."

"But then some day," observed David without bitterness, "the tide will set again in favor of aristocracy, Mr. Brackenridge. What then of your dream of a literate democracy?"

"I can only answer," said the lawyer, "that we must work whenever the tide is with us. Is it too much to dream that the time will come when our children will live in a world where the signal privileges of today will become the commonplace expectation of all?"

"Please do not think, Mr. Brackenridge," said David, "that I am insensible of the opportunity you offer me, but such things as you talk of seem very small and far away from me in these days. I must tell you that I am not long for this world."

Brackenridge looked up at David in surprise. "Is it as bad as that?" he exclaimed. "I knew, of course—"

His voice trailed away and David answered him: "I don't know how long—a year or two perhaps—but however long it may prove to be my desire is to spend it in preaching the way. The church may cast me off but it cannot obscure my vision. I can see it now more clearly every day, stretching away before me like a white road in a dream, the road to the delectable country."

Brackenridge was silent for a moment and when he spoke it was in a softened voice.

"I perceive that we all have our dreams," he said, "but still we must consider the pressing needs of this life. What of your family, David?"

"The Lord will provide," answered David. "The psalmist assures us that he had never seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread."

"Aye," retorted Brackenridge, and his habitual cloak of scorn seemed visibly to settle over him again, "it may be that King David never saw it, but I can assure you that Hugh Brackenridge has seen it. Indeed, if I cared to, I could reach out my hand this instant and touch a righteous man who has been both forsaken and hungry."

* * * * *

When David reached the cabin above Chartiers Creek he found Coffeen awaiting his return.

"You needn' fear, Massa David," said Coffeen, "I'se heah legal. Heah's mah liberatin' papuh. Fritts Majah done gib me mah freedom an' I come up de ribber wif Mistuh Fink."

"But why did you come, Coffeen?" persisted David. "Why didn't you stay in Natchez?"

Coffeen dropped his eyes and his tongue seemed to fill his mouth. "Well—you see, suh, Cap'n Thorne, he done

got drowned in de ribber, an' I thought I'd bettah come away—"

"Coffeen, look at me! Did you—?"

"No—no—Massa David. I didn' do it. 'Fore Gord I didn'."

"You're lying, Coffeen—" began David, then stopped. He saw again a hill above the ice-packed Ohio and a colored girl lying stiff and cold in death while her brother sat beside her sleeping the sleep of exhaustion, but with the fat tears running down his cheeks in sorrow for the little sister that he would never see again.

"I think I understand, Coffeen," said David. Then he added softly, "If I had only known a month ago."

"What's 'at, suh?" said the negro boy.

"Nothing, Coffeen," replied David, "nothing. It's too late now."

Chapter 69

THE LOSS OF HIS BELOVED ALLEGHENY CIRCUIT WAS A BLOW that struck David with peculiar force. "One soweth, and another reapeth," he confided to his journal, then added hastily, "but both he that soweth and he that reapeth shall rejoice together." In his journal he also set down his intention of seeking an independent circuit in the valleys of the Shenango and Mahoning: "Lift up your eyes and look on the fields," he wrote, "for they are white already to harvest."

Yet with every day he traveled through the northern woods he became more certain that his end was near. His coughing fits were more frequent but less racking now, though blood rarely failed to appear in his sputum. The danger signals flamed brighter in his cheeks and evening chills and night sweats sapped his strength so that there were times when he had to sit down in order to continue his sermon. Since he could choose his own preaching points now David lingered longer in each place and strove to gather at each of them a little nucleus of the devout. To him the amazing circumstance was that the weaker he became the more his words seemed to affect his hearers; few of those who listened had wit to analyze it, yet the fact was that the weeping prophet's implicit belief that he bore a message that anyone would be glad to hear had always operated more powerfully than the hypocritical humility or the purgative severity of so many of the regular clergy; now, in these last days, there seemed to rest on his face a light so holy that the simple pioneers listened to him

with a respect that was akin to awe. "Brother Braddee," they said, shaking their heads, "is too holy for this world."

It was on a chilly evening of his third circuit that David came to the door of a log house of more pretension than most of those in the wilderness and asked its master for a night's shelter. The man was booted and spurred and dressed in broadcloth, indications of professional or political standing, while not only his dress and his house but his well kept fields betokened prosperity. David's courteous request was refused and he turned away sadly, for the premonitory shudders of a chill had touched him and it was miles to the next settlement. Yet as he turned away he felt no fear. The words of a Methodist song came to his mind and he sang them as he rode out the gate.

Peace, my soul! Thou needst not fear,
Thy great Provider still is near,
Who fed thee last will feed thee still!
Be still, and sink into his will.

A moment later he heard the click of spurs as the owner of the plantation ran to overtake him and offer him the best that his house afforded.

With the sharp eyes of her love Starr had seen long ago that David had fled from the realities of the world to a realm where every problem had one simple solution and he supported himself in this withdrawal by feeling that he must preach that solution—seek ye the delectable country. It was the measure of her devotion to him that she freely let him go; perhaps she saw what the world so often misses, that the man who attacks a problem boldly may be driven by fear rather than upheld by courage, and deserves no more praise than the man who seeks an escape. If David could only hold out for a few years, she thought—for a



loving heart never loses hope—he would recover from his wounds and be able to face the world again.

It was like Starr, also, never to reproach her husband for not being a better provider. Unknown to him many of her days were spent with Thomasina scutching flax, curing meat, and assisting with the scores of feminine duties on the farm in order that she might have food for the winter. It was nothing, she told Thomasina. She had to keep busy some way. And yet in the evening when she returned home her spinning wheel whirled far into the night, unless David were sitting across the hearth from her.

"I thank God that you ever came into my life," said David one evening as they sat thus together.

"'Tis I who have been the gainer," answered Starr. "I have cost you much in blasted hopes."

"They are nothing," said David, wondering how far he spoke the truth. "If I had one gift to ask from God it would be this—more time to go preaching the message and to be with you." He swept his hand in a wide gesture to the north. "Sometimes I get lonesome out there, and then, somehow, I seem to feel you with me."

"I know how it is," said Starr softly, "because it seems that you are always beside me. All day long we talk together; sometimes even in the winter I think it is summer again because I see the sun shining so brightly and hear the birds singing. And then I have little David—and the poems."

For David never went from home on a circuit but what he left on Starr's pillow a little poem. Sometimes it was a quatrain or a sonnet; most often it was a few lines of blank verse that seemed as if they might have come as part of a larger inspiration. But always there was the slip of paper with handwriting like copperplate, and as she read it the tears of joy and sorrow never failed to fill her eyes.

As he looked up Fourth Street toward Grant's Hill David saw a man and a boy holding back upon a heavily laden hand cart while a woman and a girl with looped up skirts walked beside them on the muddy road. Movers, thought David. Doubtless they had brought that cart for hundreds of miles, pushing it laboriously up mountains and striving to keep it from dashing to destruction on the downward course. There would have been snow in the mountains for several weeks now and the nights must have been freezing cold in the drovers' stands, the only type of shelter hand-cart movers could afford.

David was about to turn away when something familiar about the man and the woman attracted his attention and he stopped to eye them more closely. Yes, there could be no doubt of it; not five months before that man and that woman had taken into their palatial home the copperas-clothed boy preacher from beyond the mountains, though they had known that he was marked by the censure of the church. David lifted his hat and stepped into the road.

"Friend Penburne and Sister Penburne," he said, "you remember me? David Braddee."

John Penburne's face flushed with confusion but there was a glad light in his wife's eyes.

"Of course," she said, and gave him her hand. "'Tis a joy to meet you, Brother Braddee. Yours is the first familiar face we have seen since we left Philadelphia six weeks ago."

Her husband indicated the hand cart. "You find us much reduced in circumstances, since last you saw us," he said.

"Hush, John," said Elizabeth quietly. "Brother Braddee will think naught less of us. We have much to be thankful for. It is only God's mercy that you did not have to go to debtors' prison."

Her voice was not unkindly but David sympathized with

John Penburne's embarrassment. That brief conversation that he had heard between Margot Parkes and her hawk-nosed husband must have had a deeper significance than he had realized at the time, thought David. The girl must have inherited her grandfather's scheming implacability as well as his features and hard eyes.

"Have you any place to lodge?" asked David.

"Not yet," answered Elizabeth Penburne, "and truth to tell we are quite penniless."

"Then you must come with me," said David. "The Lord has put it in my power to repay you in some measure for your kindness last summer. We haven't much, but our cabin is snug and warm, and you will be welcome for as long as you care to stay. All winter, if you like."

"The bread we cast upon the waters in our prosperity," said Elizabeth Penburne thankfully, "is returning to us many fold in the day of our need."

There were tears in John Penburne's eyes as he laid his hand on David's arm. "Say rather that he is heaping coals of fire on our heads, Elizabeth," he said.

* * * * *

At the bend of the road beyond the Pancake farmstead, when horse and rider were like dark toy figures against the morning glare of the snow, David turned in the saddle and waved his hat at the cabin far behind him on the hillside. As it always had before, the form of the watching woman before the door of the cabin stirred and a white apron flaunted bravely above her head.

From the wood lot above the cabin came the staccato blows of axes where John Penburne and his son and Coffeen were cutting cordwood. The distant horseman rode into the trees and Starr turned and went into the cabin. Yes, the slip of paper with its handwriting like copperplate was

on her pillow, and she took it to the window and read the message with overflowing heart and brimming eyes.

Within the garden of my heart had grown
A noxious company of deadly herbs—
Seeds sown within my mother's womb sprung up
To shattered hopes and ling'ring fears of hell,
And bitterness at fate which even dared
Mistrust God's mercy and doubt all mankind.

Love, chancing by, beheld the gate ajar,
And, stealing like a little child into my heart,
She touched the wither'd stalks and they sprang up,
Vibrant with life and beauty, flowers such
As one can see in dreams alone—
Too fair for mortal eyes to gaze upon.

So fled the baneful passions of my soul,
And all the bitterness and sense of sin,
For nothing base can live where true love enters in.

Little David sat in his tub and gravely played with a cake of Thomasina's gray soap while Elizabeth Penburne scrubbed his pink skin with a rough cloth.

"It is a lovely poem, Starr dear," she said. "Your David is a man among a thousand."

Starr placed the paper in the bosom of her dress and lovingly patted the spot where it lay. "He has given up much that he held most dear for my sake."

"Yes, I know—the church," said Elizabeth. "None of the laity were admitted to the trial, but when I heard something he said about you there it made me want to take you in my arms."

"Something about me?" said Starr. "He never told me."

"No, I suppose not," said the older woman. "It was something they could never forgive him for."

"What was it?"

"When they arraigned him for having married an un-awakened woman he answered that, watching you, he had come to doubt the necessity of awakening in all cases."

"He said that! David said that about me! And you do not censure him for it?"

"I? Why should I? Let the theologians do the arguing."

Starr hesitated for a moment and looked at Elizabeth doubtfully. "He has never spoken to me about my soul."

"Then he was not a Methodist minister, my dear."

"He did say once that I had found the way to the delectable country long before he had."

Elizabeth Penburne looked up at the girl. "I think he intended that as the highest compliment his love could pay you," she said.

Her eyes dropped to little David's shoulder and she rubbed at a spot that would not come off.

"Why, the child has a tiny winespot on his shoulder blade," she said. "How much he reminds me of my own lost Davy."

"You lost a child!"

"Yes, two of them. Twin boys not three years of age—David and Stephen, they were called. I left them with their grandfather Penburne in Detroit while I—went on a long journey. It was during the war. When I came back they were gone. I haven't seen them to this day."

"No word of them?"

"None, except for a rumor that they had been seen in a Wyandot village." She caressed little David's winespot. "My Davy had a winespot, too. On his tummy—a long one, like a hatchet. His tummyhawk, he called it in his funny little way."

"Why, David has a tomahawk-shaped winespot there," said Starr.

Elizabeth's face went white; she rose slowly to her feet.

"Isn't he Matt Braddee's own child?"

"No," answered Starr. "The Braddee's found him years ago on Laurel Ridge near the scene of an Indian massacre. The people he lived with had been killed or carried away captive."

"He was not their child, either?"

"No, he never knew who his parents were."

"Could he be my boy—my Davy! Tell me if he—does he remember anything from his infancy?"

"Ye-es. He told me once of standing in a pannier and listening to Indian drums. There was a dark-haired woman behind him on a horse and a black-haired child in the other pannier."

"Stephen! That would be Stevie! Oh, Davy, my boy. I've found you—I've found you."

Her face was raised to heaven in a prayer of thanksgiving. "Did not my soul yearn upon him from the day I saw him?" she said. "And now behold, he is mine own son."



Chapter 70

AS HE RODE THAT DAY IT SEEMED TO DAVID THAT THE EVENTS of the last seven years marshalled themselves in his mind and passed in review like the battalions of an unkempt, poorly drilled army—an army that too often had marched at cross purposes, obeying contradictory orders or going off on its own notion to attack false objectives.

Had the years of his ministry wrought any fundamental change in this bewildering pattern, David wondered. His ejection from the church, he now saw, had shaken him to the foundations; it had undermined his belief in the goodness of mankind and insidiously attacked his faith in his mission. Could it be that his search for the delectable country was merely David Braddee's view of the quest that afflicted every man's soul; could it be that he was mistaken in his belief that he had found it—that he was as much doomed to frustration as the spiritually starved people that he saw about him wherever he went?

There were so many roads posted as highways to the delectable country: men sought it through faith in God, through worship of beauty, through contemplative rapture, through devotion to learning, through a hopeless reliance on kismet, even through faith in the ultimate existence only of the mortal senses. And yet so few seemed to find the land they sought. Their mortal span was as fleeting, as resultless as an actor's hour upon the boards. Then, as was so often the case with him in recent years, David's thoughts began to arrange themselves in measured syllables and his heart became lighter as he rode through the

crisp snow trying new combinations of words and polishing his lines with loving care.

Thus, he came to the Big Beaver ferry and rode up the hill to the plateau that bore the new cabins of Beaver Town. Before a log building rather more pretentious than the others a young man with a round, pleasant face and a merry twinkle in his eyes hailed him.

"Light down, reverend," said the young man, "and stay with me tonight."

"Your inn is too much a palace for my purse, Friend Lacock," answered David. "I will seek entertainment of some friend of the church."

"Now, now, reverend," chided the innkeeper smilingly. "Since when has Abner Lacock been counted as no friend to religion? Come on it. It won't cost you a sixpence. And we have deer collops for supper."

"Well, now Friend Lacock," answered David, "since you judge so shrewdly the flatness of my purse and my belly I'll just accept your invitation."

David tied his horse in the stable and fed it some oats and hay, then carried his saddle and bags into the inn.

"We have only one other guest," said the landlord. "Mr. Brackenridge is in town to see Judge King on land business. He said not to wait supper on him."

An hour later Brackenridge came into the taproom stamping the snow from his boots.

"A raw night," he announced. "I wouldn't be astounded if we had a blizzard by morning." His eyes fell on his fellow guest. "Well, David," he said, "this is an unexpected pleasure. We should have a pleasant evening by the fire." He suddenly made a wry face. "I forgot—you don't drink any more. Or have you changed your habits since—Philadelphia?"

"No," smiled David. "I stick pretty much to the same way of life."

"Well, bring me a pint of flip, anyhow, Abner," said the lawyer. "I've got to warm my cockles on a night like this."

"How would you like a pint of ale, Mr. Braddee?" suggested Lacock. "I hear that Mr. Wesley allowed that measure to his preachers after preaching."

"But I have not preached today," David pointed out with a smile.

"Egad!" exploded Brackenridge. "I never thought of it before. That's why Methodists invariably preach two or three times a day. Sort of a game of tit for tat with the deevil—or should I say the laborer is worthy of his hire?"

"I'll take the ale, Friend Lacock," said David. Lacock put a poker to heat in the fire and busied himself at the bar. David turned to Brackenridge. "I take it you're here on Mr. Penburne's business?" he said. "Is there any hope of validating those old warrants?"

"After my work today, I am sure of it," said Brackenridge weightily. "The matter hinges upon the validity of old Dick Penburne's transfer of title to his son. This is one place where it will be worth the while of the receiver of confiscated lands to have paid the former owner their full value. If John Penburne wins he will be rolling in wealth again."

"One thing I do not know as yet," said David, "is how Mr. Penburne lost his money—though I have gathered that his eldest daughter had something to do with it."

"Yes," answered the lawyer. "It seems that her parents objected to her receiving the attentions of this Senator Parkes of South Carolina, a man who was a worthless character morally and almost penniless, save for a run-down plantation. At any rate she married him secretly—she knew the common law better than you did, David—and set out

with her husband's help to strip her father of his property by involving him in unsound ventures. It's a long story, but they succeeded, the more easily because he is a confiding soul and had readily forgiven them the marriage. In the end they all but landed him in debtor's prison. All that he has left is these land warrants he bought from his father."

David digested the information thoughtfully. By now it was apparent that Brackenridge had well fortified himself against the inclement night before he had left Judge King's. Perhaps he was engaged in a belated celebration of the Democratic-Republican victory at the polls.

"I see that you put Judge McKean over for governor," said David.

Brackenridge swayed close to David. "See any canary feathers on my face?" he inquired with a twinkle. "I'm the cat that ate the Federalist canary in the western part of the state; I stroll by the Federalist wailing wall whenever I can and ostentatiously wipe the canary feathers from my chin."

"And do the victorious people reward their friends as you prophesied?" inquired David blandly.

Brackenridge leaned closer. "It's not generally known as yet," he said, "but I have been appointed to the supreme court of the commonwealth; I am closing out my private business as rapidly as I can. I would not have come down here for John Penburne save that I undertook the case for him before he lost his fortune and I would not willingly abandon him in his day of trouble."

David offered his congratulations for the appointment. Abner Lacock set down three mugs on a little table and plunged the hot poker into two of them. The flip sizzled angrily and a pleasant aroma filled the air.

"Democracy is building up," said the lawyer loudly as he fumbled for his noggin. "It is coming into its own."

Lacock replaced the poker in the fire, then sat down and looked reflectively into his flip. "Sometimes I wonder," he said, "if local democracy is not on the way out. It strikes me as significant that Mr. Jefferson is concentrating on an effort to win the federal government for the people instead of placing his entire reliance on the states."

"You have placed your finger on the trend, Abner," said Brackenridge. "You may yet live to see the federal government more powerful than all the states put together—if you will accept a paradox."

He sipped his flip, then shook the noggin to cool the liquor. "I hereby reiterate my belief in a literate democracy," he declaimed with a dignity that fell just short of the maudlin. "The people have in them all the possibilities that lie in the aristocracy; it is generations of molding and teaching that they need to bring them to their full stature, just as a child becomes an adult after slow years of growth. It was too much for us old Whiskey Rebels to expect that the people could spring into full intellectual and esthetic maturity, like Minerva from the brow of Jove."

He downed his flip and passed the noggin to the landlord to be refilled. The hot poker hissed again in the fragrant liquor. Brackenridge looked at David with gloomy eyes. The liquor had loosened his tongue as it so often did and set his mind to probing the mysteries of life and being. "You left me to fight this battle alone," he accused David, "and now that victory has been won you have no share in the glory; it was not until I could find allies like Tarleton Bates and Abner here that it could be won. With your help I might have gotten an earlier hitch on the devil. But you have chosen to go after other gods."

"But I, too, have a mission, Mr. Brackenridge," protested David.

"Aye, lad, a mission. It is the immature in intellect and emotion that follow missions. Aye, that has been the trouble with me. Once I had a mission to preach the gospel, as you think you have, David. I was trying to cure souls, when it was my own soul that needed curing. I was evading the distasteful struggle to do my part in adding a little order to an imperfectible world, and excusing my evasion by preaching a panacea that was guaranteed to bring the millennium in a winter. Then I found that I could not believe in the strictures of the theologians, so I gave up my license to preach and learned to swear. All my life I have been following after missions, but there is no peace in any of them. I was disposed to think myself a thing endued with faculties above the capacity of ordinary mortals, and had it not been that I had some idea of this kind I would not have made the exertions I did. Since the discovery of my mistake I have felt myself sinking into indolence and considering, too often, only how I shall get through the world with ease and quiet, and caring little what mankind shall think of my talents.

"But we can never escape our early training, David, Abner. All my life I have wondered if I would not have been happier if I had gone on preaching. I put aside my ministerial intolerance with relief; but now I know that tolerance is the bane of the doer; to do things one must be convinced of his eternal rightness. I never make a statement but what an exception peeps out mockingly at me. That is why you were not acceptable to the Methodist moguls, David. They wanted men who would bind souls to the chariot wheels of their ecclesiasticism by fear of hell, and you did not believe in hell. Tell me now, did you?"

David shook his head numbly. He had never admitted the fact before, even to himself.

"No. I thought not. You believe in a delectable country, as I do—as does anyone who loves humanity."

Brackenridge drained his noggin and tossed it to Lacock. "Life is so inconclusive; it leaves so many things unexplained. Our days are passed in a torment of questioning and we are at peace only to the degree to which we are able to delude ourselves. Yet, would we exchange this torment for unthinking peace?—even for that delectable country where we expect to have all our questions answered. Is not the delectable country with us now in the longing and striving which is destined to remain unsatisfied? What, then, is the purpose of life? I answer, none—only to question."

David turned to the landlord. "May I have pen and ink, Friend Lacock?" he said.

He took a slip of paper from his pocket case. "You once said I was a poet, Mr. Brackenridge. I will offer you the proof in order that you may judge for yourself."

Abner Lacock set down the pen and ink and David wrote, in a hand like copperplate, the lines of the little poem that had come to him that day. Brackenridge took the paper and tried unsuccessfully to focus his eyes on it.

"I can't see it," he complained. "I'm too drunk. Here, read it yourself."

David took the paper back and looked down at it as he recited the lines that seemed to him the best expression of his philosophy of life.

We clownish heroes of life's tragicomedy,
Impelled upon the stage, o'ermouth our faltering lines,
And then go out unmissed into the dark.
But what of that? If we've performed our best,
Have mingled love with laughter and with tears,
Darkness dissolved, we'll understand, and call
Fate's bitter jests the salty humor of the play.

But he was not reading the lines for his eyes were blurred by the tears that had sprung unbidden from their fountains. How long, oh God, he cried in his heart, before this darkness will be dissolved?

* * * * *

The blizzard whipped and howled about David as he left Beaver Town, and he drew his threadbare greatcoat about him closely and bent his head to the blast. It seemed to him that he had never felt such a penetrating wind, not even in the winter of '95, when he had taken the Thornes down the river. Then he decided that it was his weakened condition, not the weather, that made him so cold. At any rate his greatcoat was a better protection than the poncho he had worn two winters back. He doubted if he would ever be really warm again. Even last night when he had lain coughing between featherbeds, listening to Brackenridge's snore coming across the bedroom, he had not been warm.

The thought of Brackenridge brought back the words with which the lawyer had reproached himself for preaching the gospel; David had known that the words were intended for him. Could it be true that the ministry was a peculiarly subtle escape from facing life's problems, a laying of incense to the soul for a little good accomplished? He thought of his poverty and Starr's; how she had managed to find enough to eat, let alone gaining in weight as she had, was a puzzle, now that he pondered it. He wished he had given the matter more attention. Perhaps Brackenridge was right in saying that it was the preacher's soul that needed curing. Any reasonable man would have put first the business of supplying the needs of his family.

Now that his mind was in this train David remembered with peculiar force Starr's warning him lest he preach the

delectable country in order to escape the problems of the world of men. Could it be that she also thought that it was *his* soul that needed curing? For the first time, it seemed to David, he caught a glimpse of the true depths of her love for him; she had uncomplainingly given him up to certain death and had existed in poverty and loneliness in order that he might live his life as he felt he should. The tears welled in his eyes at the thought and ran down to freeze on his cheeks. God spare me to see her again, he prayed, and I will give her the place in my heart and what remains to me of my life that I have so selfishly given to others.

He dismounted and walked ahead to test the ice of a frozen stream. The blizzard had stopped now, but the wind was blowing between the hills with a force that made it difficult for him to keep his feet. On his right the Big Beaver tossed its cold gray waves with thin cakes of floating ice; once when the wind shifted he thought that he could hear the roar of the falls a little distance up the river. No, this was not a cold winter, he decided; it was simply that the boy-preacher's blood had become so thin that he could no longer bear even a moderate cold snap.

Suddenly the ice under his feet gave way and he fell prone into the rushing water beneath. For a moment he thought he would be carried under, but it was not far to the shore; the ice broke under his frantic scrabbling and soon his feet touched bottom.

He seized his horse's reins and started running back toward Beaver Town, but the animal refused to hurry and David realized, moreover, that he could not keep up the pace. His limbs were blue and numb and his chest was full of shooting needles. He wondered dully why he had ever stopped carrying flint and steel. Perhaps he had thought

the country civilized enough now to furnish him shelter in every storm.

He dropped the reins and tried jumping around and swinging his arms to quicken the circulation, but his hands and feet weighed him down like lumps of lead. He looked at his hands curiously. Yes, they *were* lumps of lead. Come to think of it they were warmer than the rest of him. He beat them together and felt the sharp pain of their contact. He tried to stagger on, but he was too weary. Yet he must go home—home to Starr. He moved another step and fell before a stump. The wind, no longer biting, howled about him with a new note of mournful triumph. With a great effort David lifted his hands and placed them on the stump. Many a time he had knelt like this beside the road with his Bible opened before him on a stump like an ikon. It wasn't right to kneel there without his Bible; he was a Methodist preacher and the Bible was the badge of his calling. But he couldn't reach into his pocket for it. The pains in his chest were gone now. If only he had his Bible there before him.

There was a pleasant lassitude stealing over him; that, he remembered dully and without alarm, was the prelude to death. He toyed with the thought idly. Life was so inconclusive, he had heard someone say; was death any more conclusive, save that it stilled the heart? Perhaps—perhaps God judges us by our intentions—not by our stumbling performances. Perhaps it is good will that brings us at last to the delectable country. Perhaps, all those delectable countries that men believe in are in some subtle way the same. Perhaps it is within ourselves as we look upon something we have done—a cabin we have built, a crop we have garnered, a poem we have written—perhaps we see it in the clouds, in the sunset, in the trees stirring in the wind.

Yes, the delectable country had always been around him.



Starr had known that. He was going back to Starr now. She would take him in her arms and comfort him as she did little David when he stubbed his toe. Men were such infants; but why shouldn't they be with women like Starr to mother them?

David's nose seemed unaccountably stopped up and he wondered how he managed to breathe. He was so weary, so weary with the burden of years of conflict and bodily pain that he yielded himself thankfully to rest. The mournful gale became a lullaby as he went down and down. . . .

Suddenly he saw that he was standing in a rocky mountain gap looking down into a beautiful green, rolling country. Doubtless it was the delectable country that Old Tom had seen, watered by the river that came from under the altar of the Most High. David began the descent, leaping with his old strength and skill from rock to rock. Then the path became smoother and wider and presently it lay open to view across the rolling floor of the valley. The trees were taller than any he had ever seen, the grass in the glades smoother, and the flowers fairer; in the crystal air the distant hilltops seemed to come closer and give the landscape a tightness and a familiarity that told him he was coming home.

David felt old Barney's moist nose in the palm of his hand, then the dog trotted alertly ahead. Old Tom would be close about somewhere. David saw the familiar bank of the creek which ran below his twenty acres. One more bend now and he would be in sight of the cabin of his dreams. And even if Starr were not there to meet him, he could wait until she came. For this was the delectable country.



"Is there any immediate danger?" murmured Mrs. Mason.